



489

322  
24

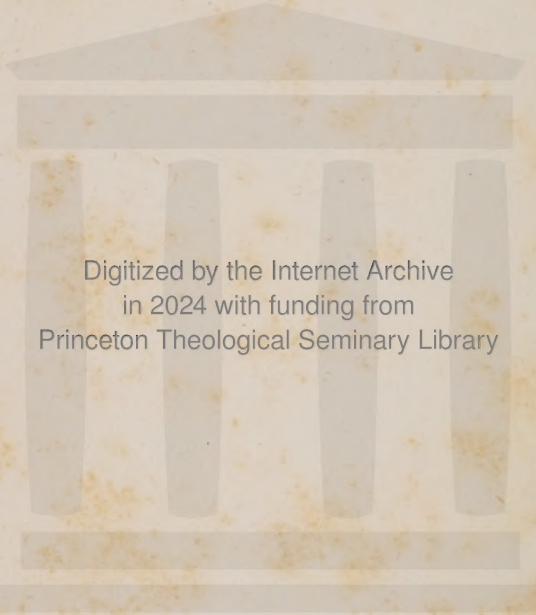
5.26.'04.

*Library of the Theological Seminary,*  
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by *President Patton.*

BT 881 .D626 1849  
Dobney, H. H. 1809-1883  
On the Scripture doctrine of  
future punishment





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024 with funding from  
Princeton Theological Seminary Library













ON

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

OF

FUTURE PUNISHMENT:

AN ARGUMENT

IN TWO PARTS;

BY H. H. DOBNEY,

BAPTIST MINISTER

---

FIRST AMERICAN,  
FROM THE SECOND LONDON EDITION.

---

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY  
AN ASSOCIATION OF GENTLEMEN.  
MDCCCXLIX.

## DEDICATION.

---

THE Publishers of this work would respectfully dedicate it to Christians of all denominations—believing it will stand the ordeal of the most rigid criticism,—and the surer test of the day of judgment. If the doctrines herein stated are true, it follows that the *inherent immortality* of man is a *stupendous fiction*, unsupported by the analogy of nature, or a *particle of evidence* from the scriptures of truth. If these things be so—It is time for the world to know it—and let him who readeth understand—that it is written,—That “whosoever shall add unto the words of the revelation of the blessed Lord shall be added unto him the plagues that are written therein—and whosoever shall take away—God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and the Holy City.” Amen.

---

✠ ORDERS for the Book should be addressed to GEORGE STORRS,  
Philadelphia.

## P R E F A C E .

---

In offering to the public another volume on the subject of Future Punishment it will be necessary to prefix only a few explanatory observations, since much of what might have been presented in a preface has been introduced into the body of the work, as occasion was judged to require.

In the summer of 1844, the "Notes of Lectures" were published at the request of the writer's congregation, to whom they had been delivered in the early part of that year. Of the reception which that little work experienced it needs not to speak. I had counted the cost, and have never regretted the effort. If it has elicited in some quarters that earthly passion which blinds the eye, and beclouds the judgment, and dethrones love, and prompts the unhappy victim to snatch up unhallowed weapons, it has also elicited from others the display of christian graces, which have greatly endeared to me some most honored members of the household of faith, to whom I could wish propriety would allow me publicly to pay that tribute of respect and affection which it would gratify me to offer.

I may however present my praises to the God of all grace, that the work was owned and blessed by him to the conversion of some sinners, and to the edification of not a few amiable christians, whose fervent acknowledgments have more than counterbalanced the blame of others.

Some of my reviewers complained of the comparative "meagreness" of the former "Notes," and expressed the

wish that the Lectures had been given at greater length. I have endeavored to please them in this matter. In the present volume not more than sixty pages of the former edition are retained, constituting chiefly the First Part.

Must I make a distinct reference to the reviewers of the former little work? The following pages will show that I have not been unmindful of their animadversions. But the reader, I am sure, will pardon my declining to notice some critiques that appeared in professedly *religious* magazines; the writers of which by their forgetfulness of the law of truth, and willingness to resort to misrepresentation and slander, have put themselves out of the pale of honorable controversy, and precluded any notice of their efforts. The endeavor to silence inquiry by unworthy insinuations of Socinianism—Neology—Infidelity—I leave them even to repeat, if such conscious untruthfulness be still congenial with their habits, and compatible with their views of Evangelical religion.

In honorable contrast with these gentlemen is the writer of the article in the *Eclectic Review*; (as indeed might have been expected from the high character which that journal has so long deservedly sustained, and which in the hands of its present editor it can never lose). To his arguments, forcible in themselves, and so lucidly presented, I have given as was due the most serious attention. And while I have expressed myself frankly on the arguments themselves, I gladly take the opportunity of offering him my respectful acknowledgments for the christian courtesy which characterizes his strictures. If in my rejoinder there be a single expression which is ever so slightly offensive, I request his forgiveness, and assure him that offence was the farthest from my intentions.

If any of my readers are disposed to blame the tone in which I have maintained my own views, and animadverted on those which appear to me erroneous, though popular, let them consider that it does not become the advocates of supposed truth to suppress or disguise their honest convictions. I trust there will be found no imputations on persons; and opinions are fairly open to the freest animadversions.

I have still a painful sense of the "meagreness" and imperfection of the work. Many of the arguments I should have been glad to present at greater length; while



not a few, which might have been adduced with advantage, are omitted altogether, in order that the volume might be kept of a reasonable size. There is, however, the less ground of regret since Providence has raised up an ally whose work, I am given to understand, will issue from the press about the same time as the present volume. I allude to the Rev. E. White of Hereford, who is presenting to the public a work entitled "Life in Christ: or, Immortality the peculiar privilege of the Regenerate." I am thankfully anticipating its appearance, in the confidence of deriving much pleasure and profit from the perusal, and in the assured expectation that it will aid what I must deem the cause of truth. If I may judge from what I have already seen of that gentleman's productions, his book will, I am sure, be characterised by great vigour of thought, closeness of reasoning, beauty of style, and deep and fervent piety, while its aim and tendency will be to honor the Prince of Life, whom having not seen we love.

To that adorable Saviour, the Head over all things to his Church, I now commend the present effort, beseeching a merciful forgiveness for its faults, a happy counteraction of its unconscious errors, and his abundant blessing on its truths.

Should I again intrude on the notice of the public, I hope it will be with some work which will happily remove me from the uncongenial arena of controversy, and which will be devoted to the promotion of that personal piety, the *theologia pectoris*, which Luther once designated the German theology, but for which our own country has been more distinguished than, (unhappily) of late years, the father-land of the reformation.

H. H. D.

*Maidstone, April 14, 1846.*

## C O N T E N T S.

---

### PART FIRST.

	PAGE
Chapter I. . . . .	9
Chapter II. . . . .	17
Chapter III. . . . .	37
Chapter IV. . . . .	59

---

### PART SECOND.

Chapter I. . . . .	79
Chapter II. . . . .	89
Chapter III. . . . .	111
Chapter IV. . . . .	135
Chapter V. . . . .	167
Chapter VI. . . . .	183
Chapter VII. . . . .	241
Chapter VIII. . . . .	275

PART THE FIRST.

“It is one thing to *wish to have Truth on our side*, and another thing to wish sincerely to be *on the side of Truth*. There is no genuine love of truth implied in the former. Truth is a powerful auxiliary, such as every one wishes to have on his side; every one is rejoiced to find, and therefore seldom fails to find, that the principles he is disposed to adopt,—the notions he is inclined to defend, may be maintained as true. A determination to “*obey the Truth*,” and to follow wherever she may lead, is not so common. In this consists the genuine love of truth; and this can be realised in practice, only by *postponing* all other questions to that which ought ever to come foremost, ‘What is the Truth?’” *Abp. Whately*.



# FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

---

## PART FIRST.

---

### CHAPTER THE FIRST.

---

INTRODUCTORY. Solemnity of the Subject—Reasons for discussing it—Cautionary suggestions—Course to be pursued.

IN undertaking to discuss the Doctrine of Future Punishment, we are manifestly entering on a most solemn and awful subject: one indeed that is overpoweringly so. Neither are we unconcerned, uninterested observers. We all belong to the system of which punishment, when necessary, forms a part; and it is quite possible for ourselves individually to experience what is meant by it; possible for those whom we have known and loved to be the unhappy objects on whom the punishment threatened in scripture may necessarily alight. And even if we were infallibly secure, and if none whose hands we have pressed in friendship or whom we have gazed on with the eye of affection were at all in danger, yet could we not selfishly dissociate ourselves from our fellows, nor turn away in cold unconcern because we and ours were by some means happily exempt.

There is much suffering in the present state; but wherever we see it here it is considerably mitigated; we nowhere see pure unmixed suffering, without anything to alleviate. There are indeed scenes of wretchedness over which humanity sheds many a bitter tear; but still something may be found as a relief to the gloom, some rainbow that derives its beauty even from the storm itself. But the scriptures speak in terms of terrible significance of a state after death, awful beyond all comparison with the present:

a state of suffering on account of sin, in which there will be no alleviation. In order to impress this upon our minds, and by 'the terrors of the Lord' persuade us to seek refuge where alone it is to be found, they set forth the awfulness of this state in a great variety of ways. The most terribly expressive terms that language can supply, the most painfully striking imagery that nature can present, are anxiously appropriated in order to affect us with suitable and salutary dread. Thus we find them speaking of 'the wrath of God abiding upon the sinner,'—'everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,'—'flames that never can be quenched,' and a 'worm' that 'never dies,'—'weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth,'—'outer darkness,'—and 'the second death.'

Now without entering into the meaning of these terrible expressions at present, how obvious is it that to all who have not 'fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel,' the next stage of existence, the state after death, will be dismal beyond conception. It becomes us, then, to enter on such a topic in a most serious and reverent frame of mind. Far be it from us to address ourselves to such a theme as a mere speculation, or as a mere intellectual exercise,—a matter to call forth our powers of debate. The scriptures, which we know from various and abundant evidence to be the word of God, assert that the doom referred to will assuredly overtake the impenitent: multitudes therefore who are 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' many even whom we have known, and some perhaps whom we have loved, will be involved in this awful woe! How then can we approach such a subject except with feelings of deepest solemnity?

The questions that are before us will demand our closest attention; and we should bring to the examination minds, if possible, calm and free from prejudice. We shall have to enquire into the *Nature* of the punishment spoken of in scripture; and how we are to understand those terrible expressions which abound in the sacred volume, whether literally or metaphorically. We shall ask what may be the *Design* of it; whether it is intended as punishment, strictly speaking, inflicted because deserved, and as a standing memorial of God's determination to maintain law and order throughout the universe; or whether it is designed to be disciplinary, partaking of the character of

chastening at the hand of a Father, rather than of punishment awarded by a Judge. We shall also want to know how we are to understand those terms of *Duration* which are employed; and whether they fairly and necessarily denote an *absolute eternity of woe*. Nor can we fail to be solicitous to see how this fact of punishment (for fact it is, stubborn, incontrovertible fact, so that nothing is gained by shutting our eyes to it) bears on the character of God, whom we are called on to love and in whose hands we find ourselves.

Thus we may well feel that as the theme is no trivial one, it demands on our part the most chastened temper of mind that by self discipline and prayer we can attain. We shall need to advance under the guidance of sound principles, looking well to each step we take, bidding imagination stand aside, while speculation must be resolutely and sternly frowned away from our path. May the spirit of truth dwell in us, and may God bless to our edification and increased usefulness, and thus to his own glory, the meditations into which we shall be led.

§ Many reasons have induced me to enter on the present discussion, some of which may be mentioned. One has been a wish to correct, if possible, some of the misapprehensions which exist upon this subject. On no topic has there been more florid declamation, nor has any been more thoroughly misrepresented by various classes. There has often been unintentional exaggeration on the part of the pious and well meaning. I think they have not unfrequently, though with the best intentions, treated it in an injudicious and unscriptural manner: for piety is no guarantee for a sound judgment, or for accurate ideas; neither do good intentions necessarily preserve from error.

Future punishment has sometimes been so disproportionately presented, by christians anxious to warn the sinner, that the world of woe has been made more prominent than the heaven which men are invited to secure; and the groans of the wilfully miserable have been made to drown the songs of the everlastingly blessed. This surely is to be regretted; for though God does not shrink from inflicting necessary punishment, yet punishment is only the inevitable alternative for those who will not accept his gracious plans of happiness; just as starvation is the inevitable consequence of persisting in a refusal to eat. And, again, an

undisciplined imagination has not unfrequently been urged to put forth all its power to call up the wildest images of terror. Figurative expressions employed by the sacred writers have been taken in a literal sense, and then illustrated and exaggerated till the heart has sickened at the view, and feelings the reverse of beneficial have been necessarily excited. Some speakers and writers have seemed to take a most strange and unnatural pleasure in expatiating with rapid fluency on such coarsely colored themes, and inventing I know not what of horror; as though it were not enough for them to make the Governor of the world a Lawgiver and a Judge, calmly just in the sentence he pronounces; or as though they would remind us rather of the dungeons of the Inquisition, than of the court where unimpassioned Justice sits, whose brow is never clouded by anger, and whose heart is never agitated by feelings of personal resentment. The wonder has been that men, after expending their undisciplined energy in this way for a time, could so readily recover their own calm and even cheerfulness of mind, and appear so soon to be so thoroughly unaffected by their own declamation. Is the explanation this, one is ready to ask, that they do not really believe what they have deemed it incumbent to affirm?

Again, the punishment of the wicked has too frequently been exhibited by itself, as though it stood alone; and God has thus been (unintentionally it may be) represented in a most untrue light, as though he were an austere master, or an arbitrary monarch. Or, punishment has been spoken of as necessary to his glory; and so the sufferings of men have been represented as unhesitatingly inflicted because the glory of God demanded it! From all which and similar misrepresentations, put forth by the ill-informed and unreflecting, what but harm can accrue? For the religion, of which these statements have assumed to form a part, has thereby increased the dislike of the very persons whom it was desired to reclaim; while many have been only too willing to accept these exaggerations as a fair exposition of the statements of the bible, in order that they might the more easily feel at liberty to reject revelation altogether; under the plea that the true God, whose character is manifested in his works, and who must be kind and indulgent, is very different from the one set forth in the bible, and that therefore the bible is not deserving of their belief.



Very unwise, very illogical, it is true; still these are some of the effects, and not unnatural ones, of exaggeration on the part of christians, which always overshoots the mark at which it aims, and which on our present subject, instead of promoting religion, has promoted infidelity, or a christianity so pared and cut down, so altered and abridged, as to be little more than natural religion, and not very distant from infidelity itself. Would we do good, we must keep the straight line of truth, nor allow ourselves to be drawn from it to one side or the other.

Another reason has respect to those who have not hitherto yielded up their minds to the truth of scripture. Is it not a fact, painful to contemplate, that though 'the mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof,'—spoken in tones of the most solemn warning, as well as tones of tenderest love, (his threatenings even being but the hoarser voice of his love, saying 'Do thyself no harm,') yet multitudes, who do not doubt the bible to be his word, nevertheless live on, heedless and unconcerned, as though it were an idle word that God has spoken concerning the future state of the ungodly? How is this? Are such persons indifferent as to whether they shall be happy hereafter, or the reverse? Not so; but they do not really believe God will execute his threatenings; they seem to think that it is all very well to threaten, but not well to execute threatenings; so they scarcely believe God will keep his word!

I would be devoutly thankful if I could show them, and any who can venture to scoff at the expressions used in scripture concerning future punishment, that the doctrine affirmed perfectly harmonizes with the stubborn facts of which the earth is full, and is as truly reasonable in itself as anything we believe. Scripture rightly understood, and nature rightly read, and reason rightly used, will all beautifully agree. And if any one who is in the habit of scoffing at the notion of sin being visited with suffering should take up this volume, I would ask him to suspend his mirth at the idea of future suffering growing out of present disobedience, till he has laughed himself out of the belief that fire burns, or that any harm can result from neglecting the existing laws of nature. If he can set at nought, with impunity, physical laws, and organic laws, and social laws, then, but not till then, may he expect to violate moral laws

without injury. And his laugh is idle, unphilosophical, absurd, unless he can afford to sport with all the laws of his present being. And if such a scoffer be at all capable of anything better than scoffing (if he be capable, for example, of pursuing a train of thought, and of perceiving when an argument is fairly constructed); and if he have any portion of manly honesty remaining, (for a habit of ridicule makes sad havoc among the better parts of our nature,) I think that the doctrine of future punishment (or the sentiment that suffering will follow the infraction of God's law,) may be shown to be as rational, as beneficial, as desirable, as the indisputable fact that the laws which relate to our present organization cannot be violated without harm ensuing.

Though these may be sufficient reasons for entering upon this subject, I have yet another, viz.—An humble but earnest wish, if the Father of Lights will condescend to vouchsafe his aid and blessing,—to justify the ways of God to man. ‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ ‘His work is perfect; all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.’ It does not indeed follow that all his ways must necessarily appear right to all his creatures, at all times, and under all circumstances. We can easily conceive of many things which would prevent men from forming a proper estimate of the great Governor; and to some of these we may subsequently refer. When I speak, then, of justifying the ways of God to man, I have neither the idea that every reader will be made to feel a perfect satisfaction in the awful fact of future punishment, nor the preposterous notion of being able to clear up all the difficulties connected with the subject. Still it appears to me that difficulties (over and above those which necessarily grow out of our present position of partial enlightenment) have been created, and artificially attached to the subject, which is confessedly difficult enough, even when we have embraced all the aids that are accessible.

It appears to me that by availing ourselves of the help which God has placed within our reach, some of the difficulties may be removed, and that we may attain to a position from which we can look down into the world of punishment—not without sorrow it is true, deepest sorrow—but still without one feeling of doubt as to the perfect wisdom of God, and the propriety of his dealings. It is

surely possible to view the future sufferings of the impenitent, through the medium of principles so obviously sound, that we shall be ready to exclaim with the company in the Apocalypse, when the seven angels appear, having the seven last plagues,—‘Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.’

§ But it may be permitted me to suggest one or two cautionary considerations. There should not, for example, be an impatience of suspense, and a determination to have some positive opinion or definite view one way or another. And this remark applies to all our enquiries after truth. Is it not indeed every way better to remain in suspense for a time, though painful, and to keep the judgment in abeyance, than hastily to take up with conclusions that after all may be wrong, rather than endure a longer state of uncertainty?

And when scripture has purposely left any matter somewhat undefined and indistinct, keeping, for wise reasons, the veil still partially drawn around it, is it for us to lift that veil, or to decide with certainty as to what is concealed? On many subjects ‘we see as through a glass, obscurely;’ we have all the light that is necessary for our practical guidance, but not in the present state much more. This is true as to the structure of revelation generally. Its object is entirely practical, and suited to a probationary state. What scripture leaves in comparative twilight it is not for us to present in clearly defined outline. It will not surprise therefore, if, on some points that will have to be touched, I shall observe my own rule, and avoid the glare of demonstration, contenting myself with that measure of light which God may have seen fit to afford. What I find doubtful I certainly shall not undertake to decide. And probably I may feel bound to place in this region of dim twilight, some things which many have taken for granted as indisputable, only for want of a closer acquaintance with the difficulties which surround the subject.

§ But let me briefly indicate the course we are to pursue. Punishment implies crime; Crime implies law; Law implies a certain relation in which we stand towards one who has a right to enact law, and to call to account; this leads us to consider the nature of our relationship to God, and the nature and wisdom of a moral system;

and this, again, may almost compel us to think of the great root of all our mystery and difficulty, the permission (or rather non-prevention) of evil, in a universe that was created, and is still presided over, by perfect wisdom, goodness, and power.

These are topics which we cannot altogether avoid. For punishment is not an isolated act of the divine government; and considered alone, apart from all other truths with which it stands connected, we must necessarily form erroneous ideas about it; and very erroneous ones concerning the God in whose dominions it has a place. We ought not then to treat of future punishment, awful as the scriptures state it to be, as an independent and isolated fact, since it is not such. The only point of view whence we can safely bear to look into the world of the finally lost, is that from which we can also see the other parts of the system wherewith it is connected.

And do Thou who art the sole fountain of intelligence, as of being, the Father of Lights, from whom alike cometh the feebler ray that guides the insect through its little hour, and the noonday brightness in which cherubim and seraphim continually do dwell, vouchsafe to us all needful grace; that our understanding may be light in the Lord, our judgment sound, our imagination the sober handmaid of reason, and our affections in perfect harmony with all thy holy will. For since thou art the Author of the human mind, and canst lay thy all-governing hand at will on all its faculties and secret springs, thou canst, as we now beseech in the name of thy beloved Son, give unto us wise and understanding hearts, so that, discerning through the clouds and darkness which surround thy majestic throne, how gloriously righteousness and judgment have hewn the seven pillars thereof, we may reverently admire the counsels of thy wisdom, and for ever magnify thy holy name!

## CHAPTER THE SECOND.

---

Relation God sustains, what—The paternal suggested—examined—some modification necessary—The rectoral character suggested—examined—Result—Whence the true idea of sin—and propriety of punishment.

IN entering on the solemn subject we have undertaken, there is one question in particular which meets us at the very threshold of our inquiry, viz. What is the true nature of the relation in which we stand to God? or in other words, What is the character which God sustains toward us?

Nor is this an unimportant question. It lies at the very foundation of the notions we form, not only on our present subject, but on numerous others of thrilling and everlasting interest. From this point men go off in various directions, and the farther they proceed, each one in his own several course, the farther do they separate from each other; till men who had commenced their enquiries together, starting from some common point, find themselves eventually wide as the poles asunder. Thus we come at once, in our proposed journey, to a place where numerous cross roads branch off in all possible directions: we anxiously ask which we ought to take, for if we take a wrong path, the farther we go the more thoroughly wrong do we get. There cannot arise, in the whole course of our inquiry, a more important question than the present one; for it is not too much to say that the most momentous doctrines of religion hinge upon the question; and our own interpretation of the peculiar doctrines of christianity (so far as dogmatic rather than exegetical theology is concerned, at all events,) will depend on the answer we give to the question,—What is the relationship subsisting between God and his intelligent creatures?



Thus, for example, our ideas as to the nature of sin have their essential rise here; and then, by necessary consequence, our notions as to the proper remedy, if remedy can be admitted; and then, being only one step farther, our opinion as to the result of sin, if there be no remedy, or if it be neglected.

I feel it right to state thus distinctly the fact that our subsequent views will necessarily take their color, to a very great extent, from the decision we come to on this point. Let a man decide this question, either one way or another, and then his ultimate conclusions, if he reason soundly, cannot be avoided. If the premises be false, the more accurate the reasoning, the more certainly will the conclusions be false too: so that to re-examine the argument will only confirm such a one in his error, all the while the premises are assumed to be sound. Let us therefore give our best attention to this question concerning the relation that subsists between man and his Maker.

§ Let me suppose myself to be thinking aloud on this all-important subject, so as to be overheard by several persons, who eagerly volunteer to satisfy my mind; each hoping to make me a proselyte, and attach me to his party. Anxious to decide, I thankfully accept the offer, and listen to the various opinions which they confidently proclaim.

The First tells me that my true relation to God is that of the 'clay in the hands of the potter:' that as a creature, I have no rights whatever, absolutely none; and that God may therefore do what he pleases with me, (without regard to my character;) that as a potter may, if he please, break into a thousand shivers the vessel that he has formed, just so may God devote me to wretchedness or destruction, without injustice, for that I have no rights; and that as everything depends on the mere will of God, he may deal with me as an absolute and irresponsible master with his slave. I shudder at the picture; but the speaker draws forth a bible, and quotes chapter and verse. I think, however, to ask him whether he has quoted the book correctly; and whether those views are really exhibited there, or whether he may not have taken some few expressions in an extreme sense, and independently of the connection.

A Second assures me that the first speaker is quite correct in his assertion, but quite wrong in his conclusion;



for that it is in reality a most satisfactory notion altogether, and one at which I need not shudder, as the preceding speaker would have me; for that the pleasant bearing of the thing is this,—That as there is no such thing as any right belonging to any one of us, and consequently no general rights for God to be the guardian of, the notion of his treating any one of us with a view to the welfare of the whole is idle; and that therefore, seeing no general interests of the universe demand to be conserved, God can, if he chooses, make us all happy, whatever we may be: and seeing he is good, we may be sure, since there is no general good to be consulted, that he will not use his arbitrary power to make us miserable, though he might do so, but will use it to secure the happiness of the entire universe; because there is no such thing as right, independently of his mere will; and in his thus resolving to make every creature happy, there could, therefore, be no impropriety.

These to men, then, wide as the whole earth asunder in all their habits, and denouncing each other in no measured terms, agree, I perceive, in one thing (as extremes do often meet,) viz. that God may do what he pleases with us all, independently of character: but the one uses the sentiment to maintain that, however virtuous we are, God may overwhelm us in misery; the other, that however wicked, God may, with perfect propriety at any moment forgive all, and make us everlastingly happy.

But a Third claims my attention. He tells me that he belongs to the school of the second speaker, but has another method of coming to the same pleasant conclusion, viz. That God is the universal Father; that he looks on all intelligent creatures as his children; that he is training them all up for abodes of blessedness, and though some of them are untoward in their dispositions, yet there are none that will not finally be virtuous and happy.

Now I find this a very pleasant sort of idea, and happy thoughts come into my mind, of an infinitely great and glorious parent, making all his numerous family happy, and himself exulting in the happiness he has made. If one wanted a pleasant vision, I say truly this is one: but resolved not to believe a thing merely because I wish to believe it, I ask for the evidence of the theory, and determine to see if it can be substantiated. Delighted with this

last speaker, I am about to depart, for the sake of uninterrupted thought and calm investigation, when a Fourth says he will not now exhibit his view, seeing I am so pleased; but he would venture to suggest that it would not be safe to trust to such a theory, unless it could be well sustained; he doubts whether it be more than a very partial view, and whether the portion of truth it contains be not exaggerated; also whether analogy, whether fact be not altogether against it, if it is intended as a complete theory;—and urges me to enquire—not what I deem most fitting, nor what would most commend itself to my imagination, but simply ‘What is truth?’

Perhaps I ought not to prolong this imagined scene. Let me then proceed in the more usual way. Our question is as to the character which God sustains towards us. I have mentioned the Paternal: is this the real relation in which we stand to God, viz. as children to a Father? May every one of us, whatever we are, equally, and in the same sense, call him Father; carrying with us the idea we form concerning a kind and indulgent human parent? This is our present question; let us examine it fairly.

§ It is capable, we instantly feel, of being very interestingly and captivantly presented. The idea is full of amiableness. We dwell in one of the chambers of our Father’s house; we are individually dear to him; and seeing he is possessed of unlimited power, and can do all he pleases, none daring to call him to account, we may of course all of us expect uninterrupted felicity. For what father would he be, who should decline to use all the means in his power to secure the well-being of all his children? We picture then to our minds a kind and indulgent father, who can happily gratify all his parental inclinations, and whose chief delight consists in rendering each dear child perfectly happy: and we remember that God is everywhere present, and that he is possessed of unbounded power. With this idea of a father, and with this knowledge of God’s omnipresence and omnipotence, we go forth to observe the beautiful indications that of course will meet the eye, wherever it wanders, of God’s fatherly care and affection for all his children indiscriminately.

We certainly observe with great delight the manifold proofs of goodness, the provision evidently made for enjoyment. ‘Tis a pleasant earth that God has placed his

children on ; a glorious sun lights them by day, and by night the fair moon with her shining sisters diffuses a softer radiance.' We mark the rich productions which he has provided for them ; how there is enough, and more than enough, of the fruits of the earth poured forth as from a horn of plenty. We see the human frame constructed for enjoyment ; the physical man made to derive pleasure from various sources ; the mind so constituted, that a far higher order of gratification, viz. the intellectual, is placed within his reach ; while there are social propensities, which surround him with the objects of warm affection ; and the various relationships of life afford some of the purest and intensest joy that man can experience. And while we watched the heightened expression in the countenance of youth, as a new world of happiness begins to open ; or mark ' the bliss that waits on wedded love ;' or gaze on the infant, that with so much of joyous repose draws the milk-stream from the mother's vein ; or read the emotions that swell that mother's heart ; and remember that ' love is of God,'—we respond to the assertion that ' God is love,' in the words that are employed, and we say emphatically, God is love.

It cannot be doubted that God is good. The happiness that exists proves it beyond a doubt. And therefore since God is one, and his character necessarily uniform and consistent, he is always good. Even if we should find less pleasant scenes than those adverted to ; still this could not bring into question the already ascertained fact of God's goodness, and, by reason of his immutability, his unchangeable and undeviating goodness. Let this be settled, that as God cannot be both good and evil, and we see him good, he must be always good, though we may not be able to harmonize everything with this attribute, or may have formed very inadequate and puerile conceits about goodness, and what it ought to accomplish.

But assuredly we have looked a very little way as yet. It would be very premature to pause in our examination, quite satisfied from what we have seen, that the true and sole relationship between God and us is that of father and children. Let us continue our investigation.

We obtain the confidence of numerous individuals, who each tell us a melting tale of sorrow ; difficulties, embarrassments, heart-rending bereavements, painful afflictions,

a diseased frame, and a wounded spirit.—We sigh, and pass on. We enter an hospital; and walking from ward to ward, and marking the pale face, the hollow eye, the look of pain, the expression of anxiety, we sigh deeply, and wonder that the Father who has all power does not prevent this: but some one whispers something about discipline and chastening, and we try to feel satisfied. We next take our stand on an eminence commanding an extensive plain, where tens of thousands are shooting and cutting each other down, till one party has gained the victory and marches off in triumph, leaving thousands writhing in agony and weltering in their gore. Is the great Father aware of all this? we ask. And is he able to prevent it? Why then does he suffer his children thus to shoot and stab one another, filling we know not how many homes with anguish, as wives are made widows, and children orphans?

We enter the Inquisition; and in dungeons of terrible gloom we see men, and women too, and maidens, chained and fettered; we see them stretched upon the rack, till every limb is dislocated; we hear their deep, deep groans; and their piercing cries make us sick at heart. After months of various and ingenious torture we see them brought forth to be burned alive! We stand next, between the decks of a slave ship, and find hundreds of our fellow creatures manacled, and crammed into a space that is to be measured, as to height, by inches; the loathsomeness cannot be spoken, while the sufferings endured cannot be conceived. After numerous deaths we see the wretched survivors sold like beasts, and worked like them, and flogged and tortured at will, till they drop into the longed for grave. We take the history of one wretched slave, and find from the history of past years and ages that we could multiply it by hundreds of millions, till there is presented to the imagination a mass of wretchedness that is all but infinite. The sighs, the groans, the burning tears, defy the utmost power to realise them; and the mind breaks down in the attempt.

But every one's knowledge of what has been the state of the world for these six thousand years, renders it unnecessary to present the facts which show that the human family has from the beginning (no matter just now how it is to be accounted for) been in some way or other subjected to every form of ill. We have only to think of what our



own memory can supply as to the state of things in different countries, and through all ages; the public calamities that have overwhelmed nations, and the private afflictions and wrongs that have filled to the brim a cup of bitterness for individuals; and then do we not feel that while there are abundant proofs of God's goodness, (and some reasonable account may perhaps be given why things seem allowed to take their own course,) our idea of the paternal character has to be somewhat or even greatly modified? Are we not compelled to acknowledge that if we still call God 'the universal Father,' there are evidently some other elements of character beside the paternal, and quite as marked, or even more so? For what *father*, having the right and power to interfere, would stand by and see his child racked, tortured, through long long months, and then burnt alive, and not indignantly snatch him from the grasp of brutal tormentors? What *father*, possessed of sufficient power to prevent it, would listen to the groans and cries and shrieks that have filled the air for ages, till every atom of the atmosphere we breathe seems to one who knows the case, impregnated with woe? That God sees all, and hears all, and could prevent all, if he deemed it wise to do so, none that believe in the being of a God can question.

Must we not then seek some other answer to our question; or else greatly modify our ideas of the import of the term, if we still retain it as the one title which, above all others and exclusively, we select to denote the relationship in which God stands to his creatures? For certainly when we think of a father, we instinctively picture to ourselves one who has a particular and equal affection for each member of his family. Nor would the amiableness of the best of sovereigns, who strove to show himself 'the father of his people,' nor the considerate benevolence of the most kind and generous of masters, who made the interests of his domestics his own, at all approach to our necessary idea of the love which fills a father's heart; which is not a vague and general benevolence towards all creatures indiscriminately, whether intelligent or irrational, but a special love for the individual, which can never no never decay, and which under all possible circumstances, and through all conceivable changes, will yearn over the child, and unceasingly exert itself at any cost for his individual happiness, which the father will even prefer to his own.



History, indeed, tells us of a father who finding his sons guilty of treasonable practices against Rome, and being himself the judge, sternly ordered the lictors to do their duty, and looked on with unaverted and unmoistened eye, while their backs were torn by the scourge, their heads stricken from their bodies, and they lay headless carcases at his feet. But assuredly it was not as a father, but as a judge,—as a governor anxious to discharge impartially, and without respect of persons, his duty to the commonwealth—that he condemned them to die, and saw the fearful sentence executed. Parental feelings were kept in stern abeyance, while the one idea of justice filled his soul and ruled the hour. Nor do we ever think of such a one as Brutus when we form our notions of the paternal character.

And this leads me to remark that I have often observed great confusion to arise (in some instances, perhaps not quite unpurposed), from the pertinacious use of this one title as that which best, and above all others, and even to the exclusion of all others which would serve to modify it, exhibits the true idea of the relationship that God sustains. With myriads of such facts as I have adverted to, (to say nothing just now of scripture,) they who cleave the most fondly, and in many instances with the best intentions, to this term,—as the one epithet which shall be applied to the Great Supreme,—are constrained to give such an account of what a wise father would do, how he would maintain right at any cost, that their explanation, when they are pressed, exhibits after all a father from whose heart are banished all those peculiar parental yearnings which we cannot separate from our thoughts of a human parent, and one who resolutely maintains law, involve what it may; so that the true idea, after all, is to a great extent, that of a governor or ruler, though a benevolent one. If, then, with such an explanation, we consent to retain the term ‘father,’ we are called on, ere long, to forget the modification agreed on, and again to form our notions of God as ‘the universal Father,’ exclusively or chiefly, from those soft and endearing associations which are so indissolubly connected with the title. The previous admissions, which made father identical, or nearly so, with governor or ruler, are dropped, and God is re-invested, if one may say so, with those very qualities of human paternity which it was mutually agreed could not apply: so that when induced by

their explanations we have consented to retain the title, they leave out of sight those very modifications, and bid us ask ourselves whether a father could act in such and such a way.

We have looked abroad among men, to see what obtains, and as yet our conclusion is that we have still to seek the true answer to our question; for that the paternal, as commonly and naturally understood, is not the only nor even the chief relation which God sustains.

§ Let us look forth once more, glancing for a moment at the *Home* in which man is placed.

‘Once have we heard this, yea twice, that power belongeth unto God,’ and truly we everywhere see the sublimest illustrations. But do we see anything beside power? Undoubtedly we do. We see wisdom directing power in all its efforts; so that power is never exerted for its own sake, but subordinated to the counsels of perfect wisdom. What glorious worlds fill the heavens; what mighty material masses; and all poised in empty space, and never since the day of their creation swerving a hair’s breadth from their prescribed line of orbit. Worlds, and systems of worlds, revolving round their own suns, as our earth and her sister planets revolve round our sun; many such systems forming one grander system, and many such grander systems again forming one system yet mightier still; and so on till all form one glorious whole, revolving altogether through space, round some central point, it may be, whence issues the invisible influence that holds all together in one sublimely beautiful whole.

Now we are overwhelmed, possibly, with the sense of power; and yet the conviction of presiding wisdom is still more thoroughly present to our minds, and we exclaim in delighted homage, ‘in wisdom hast thou made them all.’ What exquisite perfection of beauty! well may the Hebrew Psalmist talk of the morning stars singing together; well may we speak of the ‘music of the spheres;’ for, to the cultivated mind, the countless worlds that God hath formed, moving as they do so harmoniously through space, seem in graceful chorus to praise their great Creator. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.’ Now that unseen influence which is found to act wherever man has been able to explore, acts so invariably everywhere, producing such constant and uniform

and palpable results, that men have given to it the name of 'law;' and they tell us of the 'law of gravitation, and of centrifugal motions, or forces,' and ascribe thereto, as the divinely appointed secondary cause, all the perfection of order of which we have been speaking; and every single atom, as well as every rolling world, obeys this law. The stone which you cease to hold falls to the ground, and falls by the same law which secures the order of all the heavenly bodies.

And as we look yet further, we find everything subject to law in like manner. A great part of our globe, for example, is occupied by water, which comes before us in various forms. Let us think of it for a moment. The ocean, with its rolling billows, filling the soul with the sense of vastness and power—the waterfall—the majestic river—the babbling brook—the calm smooth lake, reflecting the clear blue sky—the mountain rill, like a silver thread—the gushing fountain: behold one form it assumes. Look again and it is solid rock; clear, transparent, crystal rock: again, and that rock has changed its form and is floating in the air as vapor, and forming clouds of every shape, and colored by the setting sun constituting the glory of the heavens. Look again, and in the form of sparkling dew it gems every flower and every blade of grass; or it descends as a refreshing shower, and in falling presents us with the rainbow. But in all its wonderful and beautiful changes, whether you gaze on foaming billows, or listen to the music of the murmuring rill; whether you watch the regularly recurring tide, or trace the raindrop down a pane of widow glass;—every particle of it is influenced, in every form it assumes, and at every instant, by invariable law.

It is so with the productions of the vegetable world, or as naturalists prefer to speak,—the vegetable kingdom: and men of science delight to dwell on what they call 'the laws of vegetation;' by means of which whenever not interfered with, the highest perfection of which the plant is capable is beautifully secured. And just so with all other departments of nature; not a single flake of snow was ever formed, except in harmony with pre-established and invariable law: the breath that by night in winter has assumed such beautiful crystallized forms on your window, has been in every particle obeying law. And so everywhere. Man is placed on a world, every atom of which, and every atom of

all its productions, and of the atmosphere which engirdles it, is influenced by laws which the all-wise and all-powerful Creator hath instituted.\* And all the order and beauty and perfection, everywhere conspicuous throughout this earth, and throughout the universe, is the result of the never-ceasing working of these laws, which men call the 'laws of nature.' Everything man sees or hears, everything that his hand touches or his foot treads on, is entirely under the influence of all-pervading law; the air he breathes, the water he drinks, the fire which so variously serves him, the wind which seems so free and unconstrained,—law rules over all; so that as to his very home, he lives and moves and has his being in an element of law.

§ From thus observing the character of his dwelling place, we come naturally enough to enquire concerning *Himself*; and we find that, in all his conditions, he too is the subject of law which he never can violate with impunity.

We have referred to the law of gravitation, and how the admirable order of the universe is beautifully secured by means of it: but if any man shall lose his balance when standing on the summit of a tower, he will fall to the ground by the same law. In which case we never regret the operation of the law, nor wish it should be suspended, but only regret the ignorance or carelessness of the unhappy man, who lies in excruciating agony, the victim of his own imprudence. The advantages we derive from fire would fill volumes; it is as indispensable to our well-being as the air is to our being. Yet what calamities have arisen when the laws of heat have been disregarded. If a playful child or a venerable parent has approached too near, the whole person has been involved in flames, and a lingering death of torture has been the result: what numbers have been burned in their beds, and how intense the agony that many have suffered from fire. Yet we never wish that fire would cease to burn; we never murmur at its qualities, which only demand that we should be attentive. So with water, which is absolutely indispensable to life,—how often

\* Or, to prevent misapprehensions, He by whom all things consist, works in one uniform and undeviating method: whatever may result, certain sequences always follow certain antecedents; and this whether we observe matter or mind. And to this undeviating uniformity of plan is not badly given the name of law, because of its absolute inviolability.



has it destroyed life, when its requirements have been disregarded.

It would be easy, but superfluous, to multiply illustrations. What has been adduced may suffice to show one fact, for the sake of which the present course has been adopted, viz. That God, having settled a system of laws, the observance of which produces perfect order, leaves the painful consequences of neglecting or violating them to take full effect, without any interposition to prevent. By perfect conformity to all the laws which regulate the outward world, and which govern our own organized bodies, we should possess perfect physical good, in exemption from all physical evil, and possession of all physical enjoyment: except indeed as the results of this outward regard to law might be neutralized or vitiated by disregard to the higher laws of a more important economy, as the intellectual, the moral and spiritual. With this qualification—indispensable because the physical is only a part of one intimately blended whole—the remark holds good; and thus our welfare is, so to speak, made to depend on our conformity to the various laws which God hath so admirably instituted. The language of nature correctly interpreted is, Obey and be happy—Neglect and suffer.

A moment's attention ought, however, to be drawn to one very obvious feature of the system; viz. That interposition to prevent the evils which necessarily arise from the violation of these laws of nature, forms no part of God's plan. You have nothing but law; beautiful, exquisitely beautiful in itself, and in the perfect order and harmony which it is competent to secure; yet at the same time painful in its consequences when violated: but man is completely shut up to law, as to all his relation to the external world, and as to all his own organization. He is rewarded, as one may say, for his observance of these laws, and punished for the neglect.\*

A superficial observer, indeed, might wish that God had introduced some plan for preventing, or else immediately remedying, the evils which arise when any of the laws of nature are violated. But as this is not the case, so also we can perceive some evils which would necessarily ensue were such interference the rule. Men would then, as a

\* Butler's Analogy, part I. chap. II.



matter of course, be inattentive and negligent; and if no harm could possibly result, whatever a man did or neglected to do, there would be a positive premium held out to indolence and carelessness and every kind of gratification. Indeed evils of a frightful character, and whose name would be legion, must unavoidably ensue, if God were always to interpose to prevent ill consequences resulting from violation of the laws he hath so wisely stamped on every part of nature. In fact, greater harm would be done, even according to our present imperfect apprehension, by preventing, than by not preventing. So that it is wise and good to allow law to work out its own results; wiser and better than it would be to interpose.\*

We may now leave the path we have been pursuing, and follow another, still seeking to know the true relationship God sustains to his creatures. But so far as we have gone, we think we see evidence that the character of God would be quite as fairly represented by the title, governor or ruler, as that of father. One thing however is plain; that if we call him the universal father, he is quite as correctly designated the universal ruler; seeing he governs, and that by general laws, which very laws by their own operation, which is of his appointment, reward the obedient and punish those who disregard them. Nor, whatever we call him, are the evils which grow out of the violation of natural laws, any drawback to his goodness; for since greater evils would follow the prevention by immediate interposition, it would not be either wise or good to interpose: and thus, notwithstanding what obtains, the goodness of God stands unimpeachable.

We have not yet referred to scripture, we have merely looked on the world around us, and glanced at the manner in which God manages it. And to the thoughtful mind which has been perplexed, and possibly distressed, at some of the statements of revelation, this school of natural religion may prove not uninstructional; as also to those unhappy individuals who have ventured to reject or neglect the bible as a revelation from God. For if this should be found evidently, in all its parts, constructed in harmony with all that is observable in nature; and if some of the statements of scripture which have been the most cavilled at, as incon-

\* Analogy, part I. chap. VII.

sistent with the character of God, are in perfect keeping with all the facts that fill the world; then assuredly the volume of revelation is entitled to the profoundest attention of the hitherto sceptical, nor should the unwelcomeness of some of its declarations be allowed to prejudice the mind, seeing that in reality they belong even to a correct system of natural religion.

§ We are now then in a better condition, having glanced at some of those indisputable facts which are open to every man's observation, to enquire what saith the scripture; and every one that is intelligently acquainted with both natural and revealed religion will be struck with the admirable agreement; as, indeed, how should it be otherwise? The doctrine of scripture, in reference to man's moral and spiritual being, harmonizes perfectly with the doctrine of nature touching his physical welfare; and in like manner reveals God as governing by fixed and general laws, which observed secure happiness, or if set at nought bring misery and ruin. So that evidently there is a strong presumption that the author of revelation and the author of the book of nature are one. In reading the two, we find on every page traces of identity of authorship; we are in two provinces of the same empire; or, in two concentric circles, the scriptures being the inner one; or, nature forms the outer court, but revelation is the oracle of the inner sanctuary.

Let us take the Mosaic account of the position in which man was originally placed. And we need not enter into any proof that the narrative is to be taken literally, since every attempt to reduce it to an allegory, or mythos, has utterly failed. Look then at the first parents of the human race. The pleasant condition in which they were placed, their own personal endowments, the comprehensive grant made to them, the blessing which was pronounced upon them,—all prove the bountiful goodness of their Creator; we might indeed say Father, looking thus far only, and omitting other circumstances. But perfectly kind as was the arrangement, there is yet one feature behind which presents God as sustaining another relation. Listen to the law laid down amid the beauties of Eden; 'Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.'

Let it be supposed a father, if you will, that placed man in such a garden of delight, making him so ample a grant, and conferring on him dominion over all the creatures. Dwell on these and other circumstances connected with the original condition of man; and consider them as they really are, so many tokens of the munificent love of God, who formed and endowed man as none but a God of love would have done. Suppose it then the language of an indulgent father, 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat;' and let it be deemed only the language of a wise father, forbidding what would be injurious, when he continues, 'Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.' But can any one deem the concluding part of the sentence to be the language of one whose sole relationship is that of a father, 'In the day thou eatest thereof *thou shalt surely die!*' Let everything around them, and everything in their own organization and circumstances, be held to proclaim the parental goodness of their beneficent Creator; and most assuredly we have no desire to weaken the impression which the mind receives, but rather delight ourselves to visit the happy groves of Eden, and there reclining beside its crystal stream to receive into the full heart the inerradicable conviction that God is love. But still we feel constrained to ask whether, in the terrific threatening by which the prohibition was righteously enforced, we are not compelled to admit the existence of another than the paternal element. Does there not seem to be a modification of this, and the adoption of a tone scarcely consistent with the idea of mere paternity? True indeed a father rules; he may enact laws for his children, and may punish disobedience; but to threaten them with *Death*,—to consign them to blank despair,—to doom them to final and hopeless ruin!—this makes us pause; and listening to the awful sentence pronounced, we feel constrained to admit the existence of another element, namely the rectoral; while we can but deem this even to preponderate in the terrible decision, *Dying thou shalt die!*

And when in an evil hour the law was disregarded, and the authority of the lawgiver set at nought, and the first sin had stained the virgin earth, and man had begun to experience some of the consequences of disobedience, in the misgivings he felt, and the upbraidings of conscience, and the promptings of fear, so that he dreaded to meet his

God as heretofore,—was it not in something of the character of a judge that God manifested himself, and condemned the guilty parties? And though the judge was pitiful, yet ‘he drove out the man’ from his home of happiness, and suffered him to reap as he had sown. So ‘sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men, because all have sinned.’ It is true that man was now placed by the kindness of God under another dispensation, one of mercy and grace; but this had its requirements, its conditions, and he who did not choose to come under these, remained absolutely and strictly in the domain of law.

And what is the testimony of the deluge? ‘God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually:—and the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth.’ We know the issue—and almost holding our breath, like men on the perilous edge of battle, we realize the scene when the waters rose higher and higher, sweeping into one limitless sea the couch of infancy, the homes of manhood, the retreats of age; when every vigorous and every beautiful form were tossed about like ocean’s playthings; when all that lived drank of the gurgling waters, and corpses floated like straws on the conquering billows, or sunk by thousands into the caverns of the deep. Was this a *Father’s* doings, we ask, or the work of one who at least sustained the character of a ruler and a judge, whatever other relationships might exist in combination? And so when the four guilty cities of the plain were overthrown by fire from heaven; evidences of the paternal relationship are not very apparent in their melancholy but righteous doom, while another character would seem to be visible enough.

And we may refer to another epoch: the giving of the law to the assembled Israelites, amid the silence and sublimity of Horeb. Solemn and alarming were the preparations; the base of Sinai was to be guarded from approach, and whoever ventured to touch the mount was to be put to death. The command was given to Moses—‘Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death: there shall not a hand touch it, but he



shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live." Blessings were pronounced on the obedient, curses on those who should disobey the injunctions given: and one of the first things to be attended to, when they entered the land of Canaan, was the assembling of the whole multitude in an appointed spot, and the solemn repetition, by the Levites, of certain prescribed curses on the disobedient, and certain blessings to be experienced by the obedient. The entire history of that people would show how constantly God manifested himself as a law-giver and ruler, kind, compassionate, and merciful, it is true, but not as sustaining a merely parental relation.

And now we may refer to all the statements of scripture concerning the general judgment. It is solemnly and distinctly asserted that all who have ever lived shall be awakened from the sleep of death, and shall come forth from their graves, and shall undergo a scrutiny. The judgment will take place according to fixed principles, universally applied: there will be, we are assured, 'no respect of persons.' The statements of scripture are explicit;—'we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' And the appointed Judge represents himself as saying to one class, 'come up hither, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world;' and to another class, 'depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;' and he asserts that the one class will rise to highest bliss, the other sink into awful woe. 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment;' 'they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.'

These facts of revelation, with many others which might be adduced, harmonizing as they do with those of nature, plainly teach us that God sustains the character of governor, or ruler: 'the judge of the whole earth shall he be called.' But let not this be misunderstood. What is objected to is, not the assertion that God is the universal father; but the assertion that this title adequately and correctly sets forth the precise relationship. Neither, on the other hand, would I by any means assert that this was



correctly and fully designated by the term ruler, governor, or judge. Far, very far, be it from me to deny the paternal element as constituting a part of that peculiar relation which must of necessity be *sui generis*, and to which nothing can be analogous. In a high and delightful sense God is the universal father, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things; his name is love, and his tender mercies are over all his works: but then we must dismiss from our minds many of the ideas which human paternity suggests; for he is a father that rules, and rules according to fixed and wisest principles, and no more shrinks from the maintenance of law, whatever it may involve, than if his sole character were that of lawgiver and judge. To deny, on the one hand, the paternal character altogether, affirming that the rectoral was all that existed; and, on the other, to deny the rectoral, and press the paternal exclusively; would be alike remote from truth. In fact no one word—perhaps no combination of epithets—can adequately set forth the relation in which God stands to the intelligences he has formed, and in whom he cannot but feel the interest of a Creator. He may be correctly said to sustain any relation which implies production, care, and rule; and may be termed the Master, Parent, Benefactor, Protector, Sovereign, Legislator, Governor, Judge, &c. But every one of these terms, when applied to him, must be greatly modified from their application to human beings. They are all only various aspects in which he is presented to our minds, when we look at him through the medium of human associations. The present point, then, is this:—that the facts which fill the world, as well as those contained in revelation, compel us in thinking of God to deny the exclusively paternal character, and to maintain that there is, to say the least, a very large proportion of the rectoral element in the peculiar relation that he sustains.

§ But a conclusion grows out of all this, which was intimated at the commencement of the chapter, where it was stated that much of our subsequent views necessarily arose from the idea we formed of the nature of the relation subsisting between God and man: a statement which was illustrated by saying that *our views of sin* would receive their color at this point. And so important is this to our present subject, and so palpably lying at the very founda-

tion of a correct religious system, that it may be allowed to show the connection.

If for example (1.) we considered sin merely *as an insult offered to God*, an affront put upon his Glorious Majesty; awful as is the idea of a creature insulting the Infinite Jehovah, yet some might be ready to deem it but generous in such a being to pass by the affront. They might think it more becoming the dignity of Him whose throne never could be subverted, whose happiness never could be affected, to overlook, than to punish the misbehavior, though ever so criminal, of his creatures. And this notion is strongly rooted in many minds; for among the better class of men it is held a mark of a little spirit to be wrathful and resentful, while it is esteemed magnanimous to pass by offences and insults. And as, if one man put an affront however serious upon another, the offended party may forgive, without standing upon the reparation that he might claim; so it is thought by multitudes, that God would only be acting in a manner becoming his own dignity, if he were to pass by, without notice, the demeanor of men towards him. It is taken for granted that the Most High could if he pleased pardon all offences, without punishing them; and that this would be the most dignified and, if one might say so, magnanimous course to adopt. Whence it is very easy for such persons to conclude that he will do so; and to which idea vast numbers are secretly trusting. Hence, therefore, the intimate connection of this whole subject with the doctrine we have under review.

Or if (2.) we regarded God merely as the proprietor of the universe, and the Lord of all his creatures, to whose services he had a claim, so that to withhold these services was to *defraud God of his right*; or as the prophet speaks, to rob God,—so that we become, as it were, indebted to him, as the scriptures sometimes speak of our trespasses as debts; then also some might be ready to imagine that (as any human creditor can, if he chooses to do so, excuse any debtor the sum he owes; and for the most part will do so if the latter have nothing to pay with), it would be but kind in God to forgive his creatures the debts they are utterly unable to discharge. At all events, it is alleged, there would be no impropriety in thus obliterating the demand; seeing that God himself could not in the faintest degree be wronged. And, certainly, if the scriptures had spoken of

sin in no other terms ; and if this accommodated use of the word 'debt' to denote sins were understood literally, and correctly taken to be the exclusive notion to be formed of sin ; it would not seem altogether unreasonable to adopt such a strain.

Again, if sin be regarded (3.) chiefly *as to its own intrinsic evil*, and a sinner be considered merely as one who has deformed his nature, and rendered himself vile and odious ; then, upon reformation, all the consequences of sin might perhaps be expected to terminate. And thus one would think nothing necessary but reformation ; upon which the creature, heretofore alienated, would as a matter of course be restored to the perfect favor of his Maker.

Thus we see how necessarily our views of sin, and therefore of what ought to be the consequences of sin, grow out of the conclusion we form touching the relation in which we stand to God.

Now we have seen that the character which God sustains is not merely the parental, but also to a very high degree the rectoral ; that of a governor and lawgiver. And if this be so, of which I think every impartial observer of the facts of the case must be convinced, our views of sin must differ greatly from those that have been suggested. It is quite true that sin is an awful insult offered to the Majesty of Heaven : true that it is a withholding from God what he has a right to demand from his creatures : and true that, to an infinitely Holy Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, it is infinitely abhorrent, the abominable thing which he hateth. But all this is an exceedingly deficient statement of the evil of sin ; which in addition to all these views is also to be regarded as (4.) *a violation of the law* given by the Supreme Being, as Governor of the universe ; the criminality being not diminished, but heightened by the fact that the lawgiver sustains the parental as well as the rectoral character. In scripture phrase, 'sin is the transgression of the law.' Whence it is not difficult, after a little further examination, to reach as a conclusion, the inevitableness of punishment.

### CHAPTER THE THIRD.

---

Moral System—desirableness of—Excellency of law—seen in its nature—tendency—approved by conscience—exemplified by Christ—Propriety of punishment—Yet some not punished—why—Atonement—Bearing of on impenitent—Punishment inevitable

THE fact that sin, over and above all other views of it, is to be especially regarded as the violation of law, rendering the transgressor obnoxious to the displeasure of the Moral Governor, brings us to another branch of our subject, and constrains us to consider the nature of the system under which man is placed, and in which he stands toward his Creator in the relation of the governed to the governor.

It is most abundantly evident—from all the circumstances of the case, to which we need not now refer—that God has adopted a plan of government for his intelligent creatures, that is admirably suited to their natures. He governs them not by mere force, as inanimate matter is blindly obedient to the physical impulses to which it is subjected; nor by instinctive impulses, as the brute creation is governed; but by an intelligent appeal to them; making known his will, expressing what he would have them to do, promising rewards to obedience, punishment to transgression. This is how God hath chosen to govern intelligent creatures; it is what is meant by the common phrase, 'the moral government of God,' which is a government of intelligent creatures, by an appeal to their sense of right, and by an address to their hopes and fears:—in other words, by the presentation of suitable motives; i. e. by rewards and punishments.

On this subject we must dwell a little, as it greatly assists

toward a right conclusion concerning future punishment, and indeed concerning other important doctrines. In fact it would be impossible for us to form correct ideas on our present subject without referring, though briefly, to the nature of a system of moral government. We may however treat the matter historically, as fact, rather than abstractedly, as doctrine: for our religion is eminently one of facts. That God made man upright, we are assured by the highest authority. Man as a creature was perfect. Not, however, that we are to understand by this anything incompatible with the fact that he was of course devoid of all experience, and was placed only at the very starting point of his course. But there was no suitable endowment withheld; God looked upon him, and pronounced him good. Let us also look at him before sin entered, and while yet the groves of Eden echoed to his joyous tones. He had perceptive faculties, by which he could discern the nature and bearing of things about him: he had appetites, the gratification of which would be one source of pleasure, while it would also sustain his being: he had a moral sense, a sense of right and wrong, which would dictate to him as to the proper exercise of both his intellectual and his lower faculties; and he was free to act as he might choose. Thus he had all the faculties we can deem at all desirable; and all his powers, as he came from the Creator's hand, were nicely balanced, or adjusted.

Now let us suppose the improvement, the elevation of this being, to be the benevolent object which his Maker proposes. How shall this be accomplished? In other words, how shall his character be improved, matured? What system shall be adopted with a view to the progressiveness of his character, and thus the increase of his happiness? We have admired him as constituted by his Maker, endowed as we have seen with certain faculties, But must not these faculties be exercised? Can there be growth in character without these faculties being called into exercise? Assuredly not. And if it be wise and good to endow man with moral and intellectual faculties, and with appetites, and with the power of volition, or will, implying choice, it must be wise and good to call into exercise the faculties bestowed: the only way, too, in which we can conceive of real growth in character and happiness. But how much this involves! In fact it involves the



whole question; for what have we asserted but that it is wise and good to place man in such circumstances as that there shall be objects to exercise his perceptive faculties, to solicit his appetites, to invite his volitions, and thus to call out the decision of conscience, or the moral sense, in harmony with which ought to be all his volitions and conduct.

But this implies, of necessity, the possibility of going wrong. Choice necessarily involves this. In other words, placing an intelligent creature like man in circumstances the most fitted, by the exercise of all his faculties, to mature his character, and thus elevate him in the scale of being, involves the possibility of failure, of deterioration, of sin, and misery. For infallibility belongs to God alone. It is an incommunicable prerogative. It would be a contradiction in terms to speak of an infallible creature. We might as well talk of a created God. And to suggest that God should so interpose, with a creature thus situated, as to secure right volitions at every moment, is to suggest that which would be incompatible with the system which we had previously concluded to be the best for an intelligent creature thus constituted to be placed in. For the proper point of time for us to judge of the desirableness of a moral system, is when the creature, thus endowed, with all his attributes exquisitely balanced, enters on his course; which we perceive indeed to involve the possibility, not necessity, of failure; but which at the same time exhibits the best method, if only vigilantly attended to by the probationer, of continued and unlimited improvement.

An eminent writer has well said—‘We will not say that we envy our first parents; for we feel that there may be a higher happiness than theirs; a happiness won through struggle with inward and outward foes,—the happiness of power and victory,—the happiness of disinterested sacrifices and wide-spread love,—the happiness of boundless hope, and of thoughts which wander through eternity.’\*

Now the circumstances in which man was placed, by calling into exercise his various faculties, were admirably adapted for his improvement. He was forbidden to eat of the fruit of a certain tree. His powers of perception would enable him to perceive the desirableness of the food; and

\* Dr. Channing, in his Review of the Character and Writings of Milton.

his appetite would be stimulated. He might also perceive the undesirableness of indulging his appetite, because the fruit was prohibited; and in aid of this would come the moral sense, the feeling that it would be wrong to eat—right to abstain. The higher susceptibilities ought, we will say, to triumph over the lower. And if they had, how decidedly would the character have been raised by the conflict with the temptation, and by the victory gained. There would have been an increased tone of vigor; while the consciousness of doing right, and the exercise of the higher faculties which had been thus stimulated, would have raised the tone of happiness. Moreover, a habit of subordinating the lower to the higher susceptibilities would have begun to be formed; and every repetition of such conquest would have strengthened the habit of virtue; till eventually such an elevation would have been attained, as that the certainty of always acting rightly might have been confidently predicted.

But on the other hand, and as it happened, the lower susceptibilities were allowed to operate unduly; the tempting fruit was gazed on; its alleged properties increasingly stimulated the desire to partake; the exquisite balance of the faculties trembled, and was eventually destroyed by the allowed increase of appetite; present gratification was coveted; and in an evil hour man reached forth his hand, and, contrary to the moral sense, broke the law of his Maker.

But to conclude a branch of the subject which by universal consent transcends the ability of the human mind in its present incipient state to fathom, and on which it would be the height of presumption to imagine that one could cast more than the feeblest possible glimmering of light, even if so much as this may be conceded; we may, I think, very satisfactorily perceive this, viz., that if it be wise and good to endow man with faculties, it must be every way desirable that they should be exercised. Thus only can the intelligent creature advance to higher and yet higher grades. But if a moral system be the wisest and best for such a creature, as a whole; then, the contingent evils which necessarily may arise (not must) do not in any degree impeach the wisdom and goodness of the benevolent Creator.

To return then from the precincts, which we had nearly touched, of a subject at present shrouded in perhaps im-

penetrable mystery, and confessedly surrounded like the throne of the Eternal with clouds and darkness; emerging again from the grey twilight of reason into the clearer light of revelation, we shall tread upon our path with a less hesitating step, for our way is now much plainer. We better understand the character which God sustains, and the system under which man is placed. As to the former—whatever other titles we may call him by—‘the Lord is our King, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our Judge.’ And as to the latter, we are governed by motives presented to us, by an appeal to our hopes and fears; every way the most desirable method of governing intelligent creatures. God’s will, then, comes to us in the form, not of mere counsel or advice, but of law. And as law it is of course enforced by proper sanctions; fenced on the one hand by the most glowing promises, on the other by awful threatenings. We come then to the consideration of this law, which in substance and essence is given to all moral agents, and which will never be repealed, nor even qualified. We might take as a motto the apostolic assertion, ‘The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.’ Rom. vii. 12. And so our subject at present is

### § THE EXCELLENCY OF THE DIVINE LAW.

By the first clause of the text just quoted the apostle means that the law as a whole is agreeable to the character of God, and calculated to promote holiness. When he goes on to speak of ‘the commandment,’ he seems to refer to the law taken in its various parts separately; each specific requirement is ‘holy, just and good,’ with perhaps a special reference to that one which he had been particularly alluding to, ‘Thou shalt not covet,’ and which might serve as a key to the whole, by showing that they extend to the heart. ‘The commandment,’ then ‘is holy’—pure, free from all defect; ‘just’—agreeable to justice, right in the very nature of things; ‘good’—in the object and end it is designed and calculated to accomplish, benevolent, adapted to secure happiness.

We might indeed well conclude, even prior to examination, that a law given by God would necessarily be characterised by highest excellence. If we did not know what the law itself was, if the bare fact alone were announced to us,

that God had authoritatively published a law which was to regulate the conduct and feelings of his creatures, both towards himself and in all their intercourse with each other, we nevertheless might, antecedently to all knowledge of its nature, positively conclude that the stamp of perfection must be indelibly impressed upon it. For how could it be supposed credible, coming from an infallibly wise and good Being, that there should be either deficiency or excess? that there should be an arbitrary exaction of more, or a weak toleration of less, than was exactly proper? To suppose God capable of issuing a law requiring either more or less than was exactly right, is to suppose him acting without wisdom and without goodness; in fact, it is to deny altogether the existence of those attributes which distinguish Deity,—perfect wisdom, perfect justice, perfect benevolence.

We have then, in the essential character of God, a guarantee that the law which issues from him shall be neither deficient nor superfluous; ‘his work is perfect.’ And then if he give a perfect law, it must be right to enforce it; and there must be as much wisdom, and even goodness, in his guarding it when given, as there is of those qualities in his giving it at first: and consequently it is as right to punish the violation of law, as it was right originally to enact law at all.

But we will not rest the case on the presumed excellence of the law; we will examine it for ourselves; it invites the investigation of the thoughtful, and it deserves their admiration, for it is beautiful as the laws which God hath stamped on nature, and by which he secures the order and harmony of the universe.

But what do we mean by ‘The Law?’ We will endeavor to answer the question, and in so doing shall perceive that—

§ 1. The excellency of the law is seen in its very Nature. Generally, we mean by the law that which is commonly called ‘the moral law,’ presented to us in the shape of distinct commandments, ten in number; prescribing to each one of us concerning God in the first place, and then concerning our deportment to all our fellow creatures. These are illustrated, and their extensive bearing shown, by many other precepts which are scattered through the scriptures. But there is not a single injunction or prohibition (of a moral kind we mean, of course, not referring now to



the ceremonial law given to the Israelites, which has another explanation) which is not referable to one or other of these commandments, and included in it.

If, however, without any amplification, we wish to have the whole law in a closely condensed form, so that we may bring it under the eye in one view in all its entirety, we can do so. It lies in a small compass as summed up for us by its divine interpreter, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself.' Thus it consists of two parts. Let us examine it in both its branches, and see if it be not 'holy, and just, and good.'

As to the *First* part, is it not well to call on the creature to love, and reverence, and worship, and obey his all-wise and kind Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, to whom he owes life and breath and all things, and on whom he entirely depends? Must it not be right to love perfect excellence and goodness—to submit to perfect wisdom—to manifest gratitude for kindness? Must it not be right to worship God? and if so, right to worship him in the way which he may see fit to prescribe? And if all this be right, is it not of course right to require it? And if so, would it not therefore be wrong to dispense with it? Then this first part of the law cannot be excepted against.

The *Second* branch is drawn out for us into six particulars; the admirable propriety of which will be the more readily recognised, if we consider ourselves the objects on whose behalf the law is made, rather than the subjects to whom it is given. In the First of which God very wisely and kindly confirms parental authority, and dictates to children as to their behavior towards those who gave them birth. They are to love and respect and obey them, kindly cherishing them in old age, if need require, tending them and soothing them to life's latest hour. All parents must approve this requirement; and if in any case the young were disposed to murmur at it, feeling it an irksome yoke, we should appeal from their present to their future selves, when they also shall sustain the parental character, and will be quite prepared to approve it.

The Second cannot require any comment: 'Thou shalt not kill.' Who does not feel that his life ought to be inviolate, and the life of those he loves? Who does not



decide that if any man should invade his dwelling, and murder his wife, his parent, or his child, severe punishment ought to follow? See them with grateful admiration, how, by an express prohibition to all men, God has guarded your life and the precious lives of all who are dear to you.

Similar is the Third: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' including in the prohibition every kind and degree of impurity. But to whom shall we appeal? Assuredly not to the violators of this commandment in any form; not to those who would, at any cost, throw the reins upon the neck of their passions, and with base selfishness seek only their own gratification, no matter at what expense to others. From such we turn away, as utterly incapacitated to judge; or we appeal to them in the other characters they may sustain, and as to the relationships of life which they rejoice to own. Who does not wish, above his wish for life, that the sanctity of his own dwelling may ever be most sacredly preserved? Does not every one who answers to the name of brother, husband, father, with a knit brow and a flushed cheek, and in a tone of deepest emotion, assert that his own beloved relatives ought, by every means possible to devise, to be most sacredly guarded from even the slightest harm? Would he not have them protected by the strongest sanctions law can give, shielded as by triple brass, from the faintest breath of the spoiler? How benevolent, then, the law which forbids, under penalty of God's displeasure, every one from blighting the fair blossoms you so sensitively cherish. God himself puts a fence around your dwelling; and in a tone of command that will not be slighted with impunity, warns off every profane intruder, and forbids even the faintest wish to wrong you. Thus is he by this law the kind guardian of your domestic peace.

Similar is the Fourth: 'Thou shalt not steal.' Again consider yourself the object in whose favor the law is made, and you will recognise that hereby God sets a hedge about all you have; your possessions are to be your own entirely, and no one is to deprive you of the least portion, or to defraud you in any transaction. So with the Fifth. All persons are forbidden to meddle with your fair fame; your character is to be as sacred as your life: God will not hold that individual guiltless who misrepresents you in any way. And knowing that all outward improprieties and positive wrongs begin in the heart;—in the Sixth he prohibits all

persons from wishing to wrong you in the least degree, or to gratify themselves at your expense.

Thus God decides how all persons shall behave to you, thus kindly does he guard you on every hand. While in other parts of scripture, these requirements are explained to be positive in their real meaning, as well as negative: so that persons are not to be content with simply abstaining from doing you harm; they are to do you good as occasion may require; they are to embrace all opportunities of increasing your comfort and happiness, and are to love you as they love themselves. Thus extensively has God cared for your welfare; thus strict is the charge he has given to all men concerning you.

Is not the law, then, holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good? And then is it not quite as excellent when you are the subject, as when you are the object of it? when it is law to you concerning all your conduct towards others, as when it is law to others concerning you?

§ 2. But observe its excellency in its tendency to make the observer of it happy.

And it has this tendency in many ways. There would be in one who should perfectly keep the law a perfect satisfaction with himself. Conscience would never speak in an accusing tone, but always the language of approval. There would be a sense of God's approbation, which would fill the heart with joy.

It will be admitted by every reflecting person, that happiness does not depend so much on external circumstances, as upon the state of our own minds. We are dependent on ourselves rather than upon others. Take an ambitious, restless, dissatisfied man, and load him with riches, honors, authority; will he be happy? You unhesitatingly answer, No. But why not? Because, you reply, his own disposition will prevent. Take another,—a suspicious, jealous, irritable, and revengeful man; place him amongst the peaceful and amiable; will he be happy? No, his wretched temper will be a perpetual preventive of enjoyment, and if he do not find sources of disquietude, he will make them. On the contrary, let a man of a cheerful, contented, grateful, and benevolent disposition, be brought into painful circumstances, and his situation, though trying, will not deprive him of peace and happiness. Or let a meek and gentle spirit, though sensitive, be exposed to unkindness; still,

though grieved, the mind is not robbed of its peace. We have a beautiful illustration in the Psalmist,—‘Princes did sit and speak against me, but thy servant did meditate on thy statutes.’

We can easily conceive that were an angel to become incarnate, and to dwell amongst us for a time, exposed to hardship, neglect, and insult, none of these things would destroy his peace. His well regulated mind would prevent external things, mere accidents, from affecting his inner self. And so our happiness is not placed at the mercy of outward circumstances, over which we have no control: it is made to depend much more intimately upon ourselves, and the state of our own minds. ‘A good man is satisfied from himself:’ ‘great peace have all they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.’

The law of God is such as, if observed in its spirit as well as its letter, would make us happy in our conformity. It prohibits nothing that is not injurious, it requires nothing that is not advantageous. We know how pleasant to one’s self are the feelings of kindness and benevolence. I can confidently appeal to the reader, whether he has not felt an exquisite glow of delight, when, on some happy occasion, his breast has been full of goodwill to all around him. Oh yes, if we know what it is to look abroad on creation with a kindly eye,—to be glad in the joy that was felt by others, and to wish happiness to the universe, embracing in our benevolence all ranks of creatures, we can bear witness to the fact that such feelings of expansive benevolence to others, when self was for a time lost sight of, have produced a gush of rapturous enjoyment which language is too poor to describe.

Happiness, then, depends on the state of our own minds, and the feelings which are prevalent there. Now the law of God prescribes exactly that class of affections, and that only, which invariably and necessarily produces enjoyment in the existence and exercise of them—Love. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself.’ And so ‘love is the fulfilling of the law.’

Allow the imagination to bring such a state of mind before you as your own; just try the experiment of imagining how you would feel, if every selfish, unlovely emotion

had become utterly extinct, leaving no trace behind, and pure love to all beings animated your breast; the heart filled with holy love and reverence for God, so that you exulted in your relation to him, and delighted in all his will; love to God supremely, and to all his creatures subordinately,—why, your cup would be full to overflowing, and you would be ready to shout aloud for joy. Thus admirably is God's law adapted to secure the perfect happiness of every one that observes it. Thanks be to God for such a law!

§ 3. Its excellency is further seen in its power to secure the happiness of the entire universe.

Poetry is poor, and the imagination altogether inadequate, to exhibit the scene which would, everywhere and always, meet our eye, were the law of God perfectly obeyed by all. Every individual being possessed of those feelings which we have just alluded to, all would possess in themselves a source of unbounded happiness. Moreover, the mind of the individual would not have to depend merely upon itself, but every other being would regard him with perfect love, and would seek his welfare. And thus, all loving and all loved, every heart would be attuned to harmony, and every voice in concert would sweetly swell the universal chorus; for God would be exalted to his proper throne, and would reign supreme over willing and delighted subjects, who were ever yielding the homage of love to a God of love; while the feeling of every heart towards the Great Supreme first, and then towards all fellow creatures, being precisely that the exercise of which causes exuberant gladness, and this being in such a supposed state uninterrupted, our happiness would meet with no rude check, and being perfect, so would our bliss be perfect also.

What a delightful vision is thus presented to our view. The God whose name is love, sitting on the throne of universal empire, and swaying the sceptre of love over all the intelligent creation; the teeming myriads of the universe burning with seraphic love to him, acquiescing, delighting in his will, and dwelling rejoicingly in his presence; their hearts being under the soft control of love, they regard their fellow creatures with a beaming eye, and the melody of love is heard in every whisper, and in every note. Nor is all this a pleasant fiction. Such is heaven. Law perfectly observed there—the law of love—secures the happiness of



all. And it is nothing but the universal neglect of God's law which has transformed this beauteous earth into the wilderness that it is. Oh how wretched has the infraction of law made man everywhere! How earth sighs, from her deepest recesses, over the ills which have resulted therefrom, and wherewith humanity is weighed down and crushed. Whenever man causes a sigh to rise from any heart, that sigh is wrung from the bosom by his violation of God's law. Trace up then all the misery which has filled the world to this, its proper source, and say whether the beauty of the law is not apparent in the happiness it can cause, and in the wretchedness which its violation occasions.

§ 4. Its excellency is seen in the fact that the moral sense, the conscience, of every man approves it.

Among even those who, alas for them! impiously set themselves against God and his revelation, there is not one that can take any exception against this law. All have broken it, and all by nature dislike it as a law for themselves, and refuse to obey it; but all have a perception of its excellence. And that part of it especially which refers to our behavior to each other, has been adopted by all classes, and has received even from the ungodly the designation,—‘the golden rule.’ And every man wishes all others to regulate their conduct towards himself by this law, whether he is governed by it or not. And this universal demand, even from those who have violated it, is a universal testimony to its excellence.

Yes, all men love to see it exhibited and observed by others. For who is there so base as not to approve the self-denying philanthropy of a Howard, the untiring humanity of a Clarkson, and of many others whom it would be easy to mention? Yet all that was so admirable in them was conformity, in some good degree, to this law. How often men admire, without giving themselves the trouble to think what it is that imparts loveliness to the objects of their applause. You may perhaps see one who is fitted to adorn the choicest circles, leaving the elegant occupations and refined society of her graceful home, entering the abode of poverty and affliction, to administer with her own hands to the wants of the suffering, or by her soft and sweet-toned consolations soothing the mind of the miserable. You may observe her encountering all that delicacy shrinks from, a ministering angel to the wretched.



You speak in glowing terms of her goodness, but do you recognise that such a one is only complying, and that but partially, with one branch of this beauteous law?

What we instantly hate, too, is a violation of this law. We see a sordid wretch, who, having gold in his coffer, loves to keep it there: a son of misery, aye, a daughter of sorrow humbly sues for a trifle from his abundance; but the vile lover of his yellow earth turns a deaf ear to the pleadings of distress; anguish may rise, and swell, and overwhelm the soul;—he beholds it all unmoved, his heart is like the nether mill-stone. We vent our indignation,—honest, praiseworthy indignation. But the conduct so justly stigmatized is precisely the opposite to that enjoined by God's law, and is expressly denounced by it. See how, when unbiassed by personal considerations, we take part with the law, and approve it as 'holy, just, and good.' Thus in the meed of admiration which we bestow on virtue, and in the frown of indignation with which we greet the contrary, does the moral sense of all men testify to the excellence of the law. Partial conformity to it presents us with partial excellence and partial happiness; while perfect conformity thereto, is perfect excellence and perfect happiness.

§ 5. The excellency of the law is further shown in the fact that the Saviour, when intending to exhibit a perfect model of loveliness of character, made it his rule.

It has been already remarked, that the loveliest character we ever met with derived all that was really excellent from conformity to the law of God. There is no imaginable excellence that it does not comprehend. Take then the finished portrait of perfection which we have in the whole demeanor of Jesus of Nazareth. Whatever forbearance, magnanimity, benevolence, self-renunciation, he manifested, he never went a hair's breadth beyond the requirements of this law. Did he forget his own fatigue at Jacob's well? Did he wipe away the tears from the widowed cheek of her of Nain? Did he weep in sympathy with the sorrow stricken sisters of Lazarus? Did he go about doing good, laboring to reclaim the wanderer, to instruct the ignorant, to bless the wretched, and to raise all about him to virtue and happiness? Did he bury in oblivion his cruel wrongs, and pray for his very murderers? Did he forget his own anguish on the cross, when his weeping mother caught his

eye, and when the accents of the dying thief fell upon his ear? In no one instance did he ever step beyond the circle law had drawn. In all he did, when in childhood and youth he was subject to his parents, when in after life he lived only for the good of all around him and for the glory of his Father, he only, as it was predicted of him, magnified the law and made it honorable, by complying with its demands. Study then the character of Jesus, gaze on the exquisite loveliness that was embodied in his demeanor, and as you admire, recognise therein neither more nor less than law perfectly observed;

‘For in his life the law appears,’  
‘Drawn out in living characters.’

Here then we pause. We have recognised the fact that a law emanating from God cannot be other than precisely what it ought to be; for the character of the Divine Being is a guarantee for this. We have considered the law in itself, and perceived its claims to be admired. We have also regarded it in its legitimate effects, its adaptation to make the observer of it perfectly happy, and so the entire universe. We have seen how instinctively men admire its requirements to be observed by others towards themselves: and have traced the perfect loveliness of character which distinguished Jesus of Nazareth, to the fact that it was entirely formed on the model of the law, of which it was an attractive embodiment.

And now are we not entitled to affirm that the law which God has revealed for the conduct of his subjects, is as beautiful as those laws of nature to which we have previously adverted? Is there not as much adaptation in this to produce harmony and happiness in the world of mind, as in those to secure the order of the material universe? With how much higher delight, then, may we admire and extol this law of God, than we praise those other laws which he hath stamped on matter, though they are perfect.

But barren admiration is not the point at which we may stop; there are obvious conclusions which we may not lose sight of. It must be admitted, for example (1.) That it was every way wise and benevolent and right for God to give such a law as this; perfectly right to call on all his creatures to love him supremely, and to love one another perfectly and uninterruptedly; necessarily right, for we

cannot conceive that the opposite course would be at all right, viz. that he should not call on them to love him, and to love one another. To dispense with this, would be to dispense with what was essential to the happiness of all; and which therefore would not have been benevolent, but the very reverse even, unkind and cruel.

Then (2.) it must be as proper to guard a law, so necessary to the general welfare. By how much it was wise and good to give such a law, by just so much must it be wise and even benevolent, to insist on its being obeyed. For as well not enact law, as leave every one at full liberty to observe it or not, just as he chooses; in which case it would not be law at all. But the proper guard of law is penalty threatened to the transgressor, which cannot therefore be dispensed with; the universal welfare requires to be thus protected. It is wise and good, therefore, to threaten punishment to the man who shall set the law at nought, for the violation of law is the only thing that can introduce disorder and anarchy, which has accordingly to be prevented by all proper means.

But if it be right to threaten, it must be (3.) right to fulfil the threatening. For it cannot be right for the Supreme Governor to speak, and not to keep his word. He must ever be the God of truth. And it would soon be known that though he threatened awfully, it was nothing but an idle word which might be disregarded with impunity; and then it is all one, as though there were no such law at all; and so the entire universe is given up of God, wholly abandoned to utter lawlessness! But by how much we shrink from this, by so much do we acknowledge that God must execute his threatenings. That due regard to the whole, which it were awful beyond conception to think of as not paid, demands that the law, which is essential to the peace and order and harmony and happiness of the universe, shall be guarded by the punishment of the transgressor.

Thus, then, punishment is imperative. It is not that God burns with resentment at the affront put upon him; not that he lays aside for a moment any of the goodness of his nature; not, as some choose wickedly to pervert things and say that, according to scripture, he brought some of his creatures into existence in order to make them miserable; but his very regard to the universal happiness compels him to maintain his holy law inviolate. Nor can

any reasonable person regret that the law of God, when violated, should bring suffering to the transgressor, any more than he can regret that fire should burn and water drown those who choose to brave them.

It is not wrath, it is not fury, it is not passion, which lifts the arm of justice against the violator of law, but wisdom and goodness; which is not that blind, indiscriminating, easy goodness which some choose to ascribe to God, and which would be a weakness exposing to contempt, rather than a virtue commanding our respect;—but an enlarged and all-comprehensive regard to the interests of the whole, with which the well-being of the incorrigible transgressor (if it were possible, indeed, which in the nature of things, it is not, for a determined despiser of such a law to be happy,) could not be allowed to come into competition or bring into jeopardy. So that the very benevolence of God, his considerate regard to the welfare of the many, will nerve his arm to inflict the necessary punishment on the rebellious. Thus we have calmly reached this point,—the indispensableness of punishment when law is broken.

---

§ But here occurs to our minds the fact, that all who have broken this admirable law are not punished. The scriptures happily teach us that ‘a great multitude whom no man can number,’ who have all dishonored the law, nevertheless enter on a course of perfect blessedness. ‘All have sinned,’ and yet countless myriads go to heaven, to be everlastingly happy! How does this agree with the alleged indispensableness of punishment? it is enquired; and the question must have a reply, though not at such a length as might be desirable, for it involves the entire theory of an atonement. We must be content therefore with a brief reference to a few principles.

The fact referred to shows that mercy is exercised in the actual administration of this system of government; while we have also recognised the necessity of maintaining, undiminished, all the authority—the motive power—of law. So the question arises, how Mercy and Justice are reconciled. Now it must be remembered that these are not necessarily and essentially contraries. It has been well argued, that if they were essentially contraries, then,—“if justice



always required the execution of penalties, to exercise mercy must at all times be necessarily unjust." There is then, considered in the abstract, no essential opposition between them. The question, how they may be harmonized, "implies that it may not be unjust to exercise mercy, but, at the same time, that it may be so; and moreover, that it is so generally—even so generally as to create a commanding difficulty.

"In the exercise of government, so as to make it an efficient protection to virtue, it obviously does become a most grave consideration how far and under what circumstances, mercy may interpose. Hence, and hence alone, arises the competition between the attributes. The protection of virtue is a just demand upon a government, and this demand may make it difficult, and in many cases impossible, to extend mercy to offenders. For the one object, the moral power of law must be supported; for the other, it would be relaxed, and under extreme lenity, destroyed. When, therefore, we ask how justice and mercy can be harmonized, we ask by what means the moral force, the motive energy, of legal authority may be undiminished, at the same time that the remission of legal penalties is conceded. This, not an essential contrariety between justice and mercy, is precisely the point of difficulty. Secure the authority of law, maintain the force of motive, preserve inviolate in the minds of subjects, the claims of virtue upon homage, and there will remain in justice no opposition to forgiveness. Justice, we repeat, is not a personal feeling of vindictiveness, but the requirement not to violate rights.

"To reconcile mercy with justice, therefore, is so to exercise the royal clemency as not to diminish public reverence for just authority; so to dispense the favor, that crime in general estimation may retain its odiousness, while virtue in the same estimation continues at least unimpaired, if not still more illustriously glorious and excellent.

"Were mercy not at all to be exercised, every criminal must suffer; if indiscriminately, or generally, without some expedient to answer the end of personal suffering, virtue is degraded, and law abrogated. It is manifestly for the support of virtue, and as subsidiary to it, of the moral power of law, that suffering is denounced; fulfil those



ends without it, and the necessity for exaction ceases. But to sacrifice them to mercy, both justice and benevolence forbid: and hence appear both the nature and necessity of expiation or atonement. A real expiation, then, must fulfil the end contemplated by threatening and personal punishment;—it must have for its object the preservation of that regard for virtue in the general mind, which is itself the end of law;—it must constitute a safeguard not less effective than the execution of law for the suppression of evil, and the advancement of good order and happiness.”\*

Now the scriptures teach that the work of Christ is that which enables the Supreme Governor to be at the same time ‘a just God and yet a Saviour.’ The mediatorial plan meets the whole difficulty of the case. ‘The son of God assumes our nature, ‘is made of a woman,’ ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh,’ renders through life a perfect obedience to the divine law, and at length voluntarily submits to a shameful death, and is laid as a captive in the gloomy grave. All this is plain palpable fact, matter of history. We anxiously enquire wherefore one that was holy, harmless, and undefiled, suffered as though he had been the vilest transgressor. That a sinner should be a man of sorrows causes no perplexity; but that one abundantly attested as the beloved Son in whom the Father was ever well pleased should have grief for his acquaintance, be exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and bathed in his own blood die as a God-forsaken one, amid the exultations and curses of the people,—this mystery demands solution. And God has given it. Christ himself had intimated beforehand, in harmony with prophetic scriptures, that he would ‘shed his blood as a ransom for the many;’ and after his ascension, God raised up supernaturally endowed witnesses, who proclaimed everywhere, in great variety of phrase, that the death of Christ was an atonement for sin—an expiation for human guilt—a satisfaction to divine justice.—‘In him,’ said they, ‘we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;’ ‘he is the propitiation for our sins;’ ‘he died the just for the unjust;’ ‘he bore our sins in his own body on the cross;’ ‘he was made sin for us,’ ‘made a curse for us;’ ‘he gave himself a ransom for all;’ ‘he was once offered to bear the sins of

\* ‘The Christian Atonement,’ by Joseph Gilbert.

many ;' 'he offered one sacrifice for sins ;' 'he hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.' Indeed the scriptures uniformly thus speak of the death of Christ.\*

Now without going into the whole plan of atonement, or showing how it is that 'we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,' (which has been ably done by others, and by none better than by Mr. Gilbert, in the work already quoted from) I must content myself with reminding the reader that the mediatorial work of the Son of God is set forth as that which harmonises justice and mercy. And we can easily perceive that the authority of law, its motive power, its moral force, is more than preserved by this compensative arrangement, which so wonderfully exhibits both the wisdom and the love of God. For those

\* In affirming the unambiguous and positive testimony of scripture to the fact of Christ having procured forgiveness for us by his death, (not indeed placated God—not appeased divine fury !—as some of our popular hymns unhappily represent, and as some opponents of the doctrine too frequently prefer to understand) the author is gratified in being able to quote a sentence from the late Dr. Channing, whom for so many things all Christians may justly admire, while they lament the unfairness, of which it is to be presumed he was unconscious, in dealing with some of the truths denominated evangelical.—“Many of us think that the scriptures ascribe the remission of sins to Christ's death, with an emphasis so peculiar, that we ought to consider this event as having a special influence in removing punishment, though the scriptures may not reveal the way in which it contributes to this end.” And I quote it with the hope of inducing any of that denomination to which the lamented writer belonged, to re-investigate the scripture testimony on this all-important subject. If the Son of God have indeed died to procure our pardon, this fact must be the grand central truth of Christianity.

And while I venture respectfully and affectionately to beseech to this renewed investigation, overpoweringly persuaded in my own mind that the *fact* of atonement is written as with a sunbeam, and drawing a wide distinction between the fact and the philosophy of it, I would not less earnestly beseech the orthodox to abate, not of their confidence, but of their asperity ; to distinguish between the individual and his errors, and to demonstrate the superiority of their views by their closer resemblance to the faithful and true witness. Truth consists as much in actions as in words, presents a standard for our affections as really as for our ideas. And I solicit pardon of my reader for taking this opportunity of giving utterance to a wish long cherished in silence, that a copy of that incomparable work, Dr. J. Pye Smith's Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, could be gracefully presented to every Unitarian minister in England. Should the eye of some wealthy christian perchance glide over this humble page, and should heaven happily incline him to make such a use of the earthly mammon intrusted to his care, who could foresee the result ?

to whom mercy is shown through the Mediator acquire, by the very means adopted in saving them, a much deeper sense of their guilt in violating law than they would ever have attained; while their gratitude, their admiration, their love exceed the power of language to describe; and sin becomes to them inexpressibly hateful, while holiness—conformity to God, becomes the joy and rejoicing of their heart. Never, never can they deem lightly of sin, (violation of law) knowing at what cost they were redeemed, 1. Peter, i. 18, 19; for truly it is now more than the mere violation of law; over and above this, it is deeply felt to be an ungrateful ‘crucifying of the Son of God afresh.’ All the sufferings of Christ engage them against it; every wound has a tongue—powerfully irresistibly persuasive against sin. Thus, by the very plan which is adopted in saving them, they are more powerfully engaged against sin than even holy intelligences who have never sinned; and their affections, as well as their judgment, are eternally won over to the side of law.

And then as to the effect of atonement by the death of Christ on others. What is the legitimate conclusion to be drawn—but that God will never relax the claims of his beauteous law, never will wink at the neglect of it; for is not this the language in which atonement speaks to all who are not thereby drawn back to God,—‘If these things be done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?’ If those even who become righteous are saved thus, and thus only, ‘where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?’

It appears then, that in the wisdom and goodness of God a plan has been devised and executed, incomprehensibly gracious, by which the laws of eternal wisdom are guarded; so that the goodness of the divine government sustains no disparagement in receiving to favor those who had been transgressors, but who with humble penitential gratitude avail themselves of the provision made. ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ ‘Christ died for the ungodly.’

§ But what bearing has this on our present subject? Much every way. It is an additional proof of the indispensableness of guarding law, as recognised and acted upon by God himself; it reconciles with this imperative necessity, the salvation of those who embrace the glad tidings

of redemption through the blood of the Lamb; and in reference to others,—to those unhappy sinners to whom our subject relates, it proves with equal intensity and clearness their awful though righteous doom. For since Christ hath died to atone for human guilt, and thus to make peace by the blood of the cross and bring us back to God, those who neglect the only Saviour, who reject his sacrifice for sins, doubly seal their own condemnation. Law pronounces the just, the awful sentence; that sentence the gospel can revoke; the plea that Christ the Mediator hath died stays the hand of justice, and secures the kiss of mercy. But what if that plea be not gratefully adopted? We call on men inspired to reply. Let Paul answer it.—‘He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?’ ‘The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Let John give evidence.—‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.’ Let us listen to Christ himself.—‘He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.’

We come then to a melancholy point. Law perpetually trampled under foot, and the very remedy—costly beyond compare—set at nought, a double seal is affixed to the sentence of condemnation. And when the violated majesty of law has brought the guilty to the bar, lo! the rejected Mediator is the Judge; he who called and they refused, who stretched out his hand, but no man regarded; and his lips pronounce the sentence, which the heights of heaven and the depths of hell must equally justify, ‘Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.’

Thus are we conducted to a point whence we look down, though with half averted eyes, into the terrible abyss where the finally impenitent are cast; and though the smoke of their torment riseth up in dark volumes, and though there be fearful weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, we cannot refrain from approving the sentence which divine



justice hath passed on the obstinate rejectors of mercy, who would not have it in God's own way. Mercy came to them with the tear of compassion in her eye, her voice was full of tenderness and tremulous with the anxiety of love, her hands bore the olive bough, and she held forth exultingly a pardon written by justice in crimson characters, and sealed at the foot of the Redeemer's cross; but she smiled, she wept, she besought in vain; in vain she sung of heaven, in vain she told 'the terrors of the Lord.' Day after day witnessed the sinner turning a deaf ear to the voice of the charmer, coolly neglecting Christ, and virtually saying, I shall live as I please, and if at last God will overlook whatever he has not approved, and make me happy in some bright world,—well; I expect it of him; and if not——; and so he turned again and again, after every renewed appeal, to this present evil world, trusting to God's mercy to save him after all, though he did not choose to have mercy in the way which God himself laid down.

Could we not then even now join in the song of Moses and the Lamb as given in the Apocalypse, when there come forth seven angels, having the seven last plagues, in which is filled up the wrath of God; 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.' And if any impenitent sinner read this page, one who has not fled for refuge from the wrath to come, to the Lamb of God who alone 'taketh away the sins of the world,' I do beseech him at once to hasten his escape from impending ruin, and while yet the day of salvation lasts, to seek God with his whole heart, in godly sorrow for sin, imploring mercy in the name of that 'great High Priest,' that 'Advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for our sins,' and 'who is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him.'



## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

---

Future suffering, whether penal or corrective—Suggestions to the Orthodox—and to their opponents—Punishment, not Chastening—Idea of from nature of law—taught by scripture phraseology—by its general tone—no tendency in suffering to convert—testimony of conscience—case of fallen angels—circumstances generally, bearing of—Conclusion.

HAVING recognised the indispensableness of punishment when law is violated, our next question is—Whether the punishment threatened to the sinner is intended in mercy to himself, designed to correct his faults and restore him to a right state of mind, so that ultimately he may be introduced into the society of the blessed, and, being made perfect through suffering, may henceforth be happy for ever? or, Is the suffering to be proportioned to his guilt, and inflicted because deserved, without regard to his improvement, but as a token of God's displeasure against obstinate transgressors, and of his inflexible resolve to maintain at all costs the authority of law!

I trust the question is stated fairly. It might indeed be put more briefly thus,—Is it *chastening*, or *punishment*, (properly so called) that is threatened to the finally impenitent? The question, then, being understood, one or two preliminary remarks may not be impertinent. And,—

1. The orthodox are not entitled to affirm that all the holders of the first opinion necessarily do away with the appeals to fear which the scriptures contain; nor that they arrogantly set up their own reason against the decision of revelation, and the authority of God;—nor that they cling to the fond belief because they love this present evil world, and wish to cheat themselves into a sense of safety while neglecting the higher interests of religion and of their souls. This may doubtless be affirmed too truly of some, perhaps of many, who have held the notion; but I must protest

against one sweeping sentence of condemnation passed on the moral character of men, however widely we may deem them to have strayed, and who differ greatly among themselves; and in bar of the conclusion so indiscriminately pronounced by some who, forgetful of the inspired injunction, presume to 'judge another man's servant,' suggest one or two reflections.

It is quite possible, for example, for individuals differently situated from ourselves, exposed from childhood to quite an opposite class of influences, to bring to the study of scripture the same amount of honesty as ourselves, and yet reach other conclusions on some subjects. The Calvinist and the Arminian (would to God such names were fallen into desuetude) must forbear thus much with each other on questions quite as important, and on which scripture says as much, and speaks quite as distinctly, as on our present subject. And we ought cheerfully to concede that a man who adopts the sentiment may be actuated by the purest motives, and may deem that he is more truthfully exhibiting the character of God, and more completely harmonising all scripture. And surely if it be possible to admit the existence and operation of a praiseworthy motive, this ought in common candour to be acknowledged. Moreover, is it not a fact that some of the most deeply thoughtful among the decidedly evangelical, and even Calvinistic, have, while of course freely using scripture phraseology, allowed in themselves a secret hope, and even belief, that the future may possibly reveal that we had somewhat misinterpreted the divine threatenings? Have not some of the most profoundly and piously thoughtful been the least confident of the doctrine of never-ending torment? \* And further,

\* Dr. Watts, in his preface to 'The World to Come,' referring to the manner in which he has treated the subject in the body of the work, after intimating that "though the light of nature and reason" would have led to other conclusions than those which he thought scripture to affirm, says, "If the blessed God should at any time, in a consistence with his glorious and incomprehensible perfections, release those wretched creatures from their acute pains and long imprisonment in hell, either with a design of the utter destruction of their beings by annihilation, or to put them into some unknown world upon a new foot of trial, I think I ought cheerfully and joyfully to accept this appointment of God for the good of millions of my fellow creatures, and add my joys and praises to all the *songs and triumphs* of the heavenly world in the day of such a divine and glorious release of these prisoners." After stating that he had not been able however to see in

would it not be more satisfactory to every benevolent mind, to entertain the idea, if it were allowable, that ultimately the entire universe would be free from all sin and suffering, and be happy in everlasting allegiance to God? Surely we are none of us prepared to affirm that this world, *per se*, be an unworthy notion to entertain of that God who hath made us all of one blood, and whose resources are infinite.

And I may the more consistently intreat the adoption of a less objectionable tone, inasmuch as while I can in thought place myself on the standing-point of such as hold the opinion, and look at the subject from their point of view, and understand how they reach their conclusions (which if an opponent cannot do let him hush) I am nevertheless argu-

what way the difficulties could be overcome, he thus continues: "The ways indeed of the great God and his thoughts are above our thoughts and our ways; as the heavens are above the earth; yet I must rest and acquiesce where our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's chief minister, both of his wrath and his love, has left me in the divine revelations of scripture; and I am constrained therefore to leave these unhappy creatures under the chains of everlasting darkness, into which they have cast themselves by their wilful iniquities, *till the blessed God shall see fit to release them*"

Professor Tholuck, the foremost champion of evangelical truth in his native land, who, according to the 'Biographical Sketch' of him by Professor Parks, has been disposed now to one view on our solemn subject, and now to another, has expressed himself thus; "If I remember right, my expressions at the time (1834) were these;—Dogmatically, i. e. as a theologian, I feel myself drawn toward this opinion (i. e. the doctrine of ultimate universal salvation) but Exegetically, i. e. as an interpreter, I do not know how to justify it."

And since one periodical at least in a review of that able and interesting pamphlet, 'What was the Fall?' mentioned the late John Foster as the writer of a most characteristic letter, a part of which is therein quoted, there can be no impropriety in my saying that that profound and mighty thinker, whose reverent attachment to evangelical religion none can question, utterly disbelieved and rejected the popular notion of an eternity of suffering; and without, I think, coming to a positive conclusion how their sufferings would terminate, rather inclined to the belief that ultimately all God's creatures would be restored to virtue and happiness.

And I may add my personal testimony to the fact that very many of both ministers and private christians, whose cordial and devout attachment to the general scheme of evangelical truth is indisputable, more than doubt the eternity of hell torments. If some of these have as yet no positive belief as to the final result, they are quite agreed that the popular doctrine is untenable. So far as I have had an opportunity of judging, I should say that there are comparatively few evangelical congregations in which will not be found some of the most intelligent and pious to disbelieve the common opinion. But the distinction between exoteric and esoteric is not yet forgotten.

mentatively constrained to reject a hypothesis which, if it were wise to allow such a state of mind, I could of course unutterably prefer. And I am the more anxious to do this measure of justice, because the censure implied falls in some degree first upon myself for a few somewhat harsh and sarcastic expressions which escaped me in a former edition.

But then, 2, on the other hand. 'The holders of the first opinion are not entitled to charge those who, rejecting the idea of chastening, maintain that of punishment, with representing God as wrathful, resentful, burning with fury, taking delight in the anguish of his creatures, remorseless, vindictive, and so forth. The very plain language of scripture ought ever to shield us from these imputations, so freely heaped upon us, of misrepresenting the God and Father whom we love. And it ought to be conceded to us that, since God certainly does sustain the character of Governor, the rectoral may at least *possibly* be the predominant element towards those whom no heavenly goodness can soften, no celestial blessedness allure, no terrible threatenings affect. Surely it ought to be conceded, else where is modesty? that there *may be* arcana in the divine government, principles yet undeveloped to us—sublimely awful purposes to be answered, requiring, after every suitable effort has been made and made in vain, the exhibition of the exclusively rectoral character towards such wilfully unhappy creatures, and their final abandonment to the doom they have so obstinately provoked. Assuredly it cannot be maintained that under no possible circumstances might a profoundly deep and large and wise benevolence—a merciful regard to the welfare of the whole—dictate the fulfilment, in all their literalness, of the terrible threatenings written on the page of revelation.\*

\* And by way of further moderating the unjustifiable tone often adopted in reference to the orthodox, I may adduce the more modest and hesitating language of Dr. Channing, who, at the conclusion of his very impressive discourse on *The Evil of Sin*, says—"I have spoken of the pains and penalties of moral evil, or of wrong doing, in the world to come. How long they will endure I know not. Whether they will issue in the reformation and happiness of the sufferer, or will terminate in the extinction of his conscious being, is a question on which scripture throws no clear light. Plausible arguments may be adduced in support of both these doctrines. On this, as on other points, revelation aims not to give precise information, but to fix in us a deep impression that great suffering awaits a disobedient, wasted, immoral, irreligious life."



But to conclude these preliminary remarks, I must profess an increasingly strong belief that what is threatened to the impenitent sinner is not chastening, but punishment; and I proceed to suggest a few considerations.

§ *a.* The idea of punishment, strictly speaking, and not of chastening, necessarily grows out of the nature of law, and out of that rectoral character which we have already shown God to sustain; and all that has been previously said, lends its entire weight to this argument, which needs not therefore be pursued.

§ *b.* But the grand question is—What saith the scripture? If we could make the next state one of discipline by writing ‘chastening’ instead of ‘punishment’ we might feel strongly impelled to use the milder word, but as we have no voice in the matter, and God hath unalterably fixed the character of the next state, nothing can be gained, while very much may be lost by our putting another than the legitimate sense on his decision.

It is unquestionably that the writers of the new testament perfectly recognised the difference between punishment and chastening. And the copious and flexible language in which they wrote would enable them to convey either idea quite as accurately as we can do in english. We accordingly find them using different words to convey the different ideas. When, for example, they refer to discipline that is intended to be corrective, they speak as follows:—

‘My son despise not the chastening *παιδείας*) of the Lord.’  
Heb. xii. 5.

‘Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. (*παιδεύει*) 6 v.

‘If we endure chastening (*παιδείαν*) God dealeth with us as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth (*παιδεύει*) not.’ 7 verse. [See also verses 8, 9, 10, 11.]

‘We are chastened (*παιδευόμεθα*) of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.’ 1. Cor. xi. 32.

‘As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.’ (*παιδεύω*)  
Rev. iii. 19.

‘As chastened, (*παιδευόμενοι*) and not killed.’ 2. Cor. vi. 9,  
[See also for the verb, Acts vii. 22, xxii. 3., 1. Tim. i. 20,  
2. Tim. ii. 25., Titus ii. 12., and for the noun, Eph. vi. 4.,  
2. Tim. 3. 16.]

These are I believe all the passages in which the word ‘chasten’ in any form occurs in our translation, or the equivalent word *παιδεύω* in any form in the greek, with two seeming exceptions, (which really form but one) namely,



Luke xxiii. 16 and 22, where Pilate, whose feelings towards our Lord were favorable and kind, proposed, instead of putting him to death as a malefactor, as the Jews demanded, to inflict some comparatively slight chastisement. And in this text it would certainly be quite as fair to consider the word as denoting Pilate's intention to prevent Jesus for the future from 'stirring up the people,' which is what he was charged with, and doing aught that should again displease the Jews, as it would be to consider the proposed chastisement perfectly and exclusively retributive. And the evident kindness of disposition towards Christ on the part of Pilate would, I think, make the balance incline this way. These are all the texts, and I think every unprejudiced reader may perceive that (excepting only this in Luke xxiii. 16 and 22, which scarcely amounts to an exception) the idea conveyed by the word, in all of them, is that of kindly instructing, improving, perfecting, by means of necessary discipline.

Thus much for chastening; now for the word punishment. The following are all the texts in which the word, in any of its forms, occurs in our english testament.

- Matt. xxv. 46. 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment.' (κόλασιν)  
 Acts iv. 21. 'So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them. (κολάζωνται).  
 Acts xxii. 5. 'I (i. e. Saul of Tarsus) went to Damascus to bring them which were there bound to Jerusalem, for to be punished.' (τιμωρηθῶσιν)  
 Acts xxvi. 11. 'And I punished (τιμωρῶν) them oft in every synagogue.'  
 2. Cor. ii. 6. 'Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, (ἐπιτιμία)—rebuke or censure) which was inflicted of many.'  
 2. Thess. i. 9. 'Who shall be punished (δίκην τίσουσιν) with everlasting destruction.'  
 Heb. x. 29. 'Of how much sorer punishment (τιμωρίας) suppose ye shall be thought worthy,' &c.  
 1. Pet. ii. 14. 'Governors—sent by him for the punishment (εἰς ἐκδίκησιν) of evil doers.'  
 2. Pet. ii. 9. 'The Lord knoweth how to . . . reserve The unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished.'  
 (κολαζομένους)

Of these, only *four* refer to future punishment; in one of which, namely 2. Thess. i. 9, a periphrasis is employed, 'shall suffer as punishment, everlasting destruction.' In another, namely Heb. x. 29, a word which, as a noun, is

only used in this text, but as a verb twice, namely Acts xxii. 5, xxvi. 11, where it is well rendered 'punished.' And in the remaining two passages, the word *κολάζω*, once as a noun, and once as a participle; in both instances correctly rendered 'punishment' and 'punished.' Now the only instances in which this word, in any form, occurs in the new testament are—

Matt. xxv. 46. 'And these shall go away into everlasting *punishment*.'

Acts iv. 21. 'So when they had further threatened them they let them go, finding nothing how they might *punish* them.'

2. Pet. ii. 9. 'The Lord knoweth how to . . . reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, *to be punished*.'

1. John iv. 18: 'Because fear *hath torment*.'

A thorough exposition of this last passage (which alone occasions any difficulty as to the new testament use of the word *κόλασις*) would form too long a digression, but I think a close examination would show that the idea of punishment is really contained in it. Let the logical connection between verse 17th and this be observed, and that the apostle has made distinct reference to the day of judgment, at which all who have possessed true christian love (his chief theme is brotherly love,—compare iii. 19—23) will have boldness.\*

But we must close this argument, which happily the reader of the english testament can understand nearly as

\* "As christian brotherly love at the same time implies a perfect fulfilment of the divine commandment, verse 21, it is when, like Christ's love in this respect, full of confidence on the day of judgment, and conscious of its innocence approaches God in judgment without fear, (iii. 19; 20.) But in general, St. John continues,—'Terror (of God) is incompatible with (true christian) love. True love and terror mutually exclude each other, because love and cheerful confidence are inseparable: for (*ἑν*) the terror (of God in judgment) is grounded on consciousness of merited punishment; but (*ἐν*) fear of punishment annihilates the perfect, and cheerful love which is full of confidence.' This proposition is perfectly understood when it is recollected that St. John makes christian fraternal love identical with the love to God, and considers the former as a necessary manifestation of the latter, so that perfect brotherly love is, at the same time, perfect love to God. 'Ὁ φόβος κόλασιν ἔχει, [fear hath punishment, rendered torment in our english version] means not, as some suppose, fear is punished, but that there is a punishment in fear; fear is combined with the consciousness of punishment." *Dr. Friedrich Lucke, in loc*

well as another, for it is a matter of fact on which his own common sense can decide. There is a word in greek which sets forth the idea of chastening, as we ordinarily use the word to denote that discipline which has the individual's own improvement for its object. The word the apostles use in that sense, as the first class of passages will show; but *they never use it in reference to the wicked!* There is invariably a marked distinction in the manner in which they speak of the pious and the ungodly; the former are *chastened*, and '*chastened that they may not be condemned with the world;*' the latter are '*reserved unto the day of judgment, to be punished,*' and will go away into everlasting *punishment.*' In fact, these two english words adequately convey the intention of the inspired writers in reference to the two classes. So that the conclusion we come to from an examination of scripture phraseology is, That the wicked, when the present probationary state is ended, will be—not chastened with a view to their own future good, but punished.

§ c. The general style of scripture on the subject seems also altogether to oppose the notion of chastening, and to convey exclusively that of punishment; so that any argument derived from the bible in favor of what we need not hesitate to consider incomparably the more pleasing view, can be but inferential, and so far as I know is never direct. Now of course a really fair deduction is at all times satisfactory enough, but how often are inferences speciously drawn from premises which, for many substantial reasons, we are confident do not warrant them, although we may find it difficult to put our finger on the precise point where the fallacy lies. So that, generally speaking, direct testimony must greatly preponderate over inferential conclusions.

The present argument then is this—The scriptures, so far as memory serves me, nowhere in their statements concerning the wicked after death represent them as being subject to discipline of any kind, but are ominously silent as to anything like instruction or counsels or motives set before them. Not one solitary hint do we find of any teacher of virtue, or preacher of a new gospel in the world of woe; no word about the periodical opening of the gloomy gates of Tartarus, to let forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God those of the happy lost who,

having been purified by purgatorial fires, are become meet for an inheritance among the saints in light. Thanks be to God, the river of water of life flows through the moral wilderness where now we pitch our tents; and the Spirit and the bride say, Come! and every one that heareth takes up the welcome strain and repeats the invitation, Come! and every one that is athirst may Come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely. But there is not the faintest intimation given, in our only revelation, that the cool and refreshing streams which make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High, are conducted through the nether world of outer darkness and of second death, changing into notes of gladness, into strains of most musical hope and joy, the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth which the Saviour represents as the only sounds that fall on the affrighted ear.

Quite the contrary indeed. None of its assertions, its intimations, its figures, call up any other than dark imaginings; they imprison the affrighted spirit in the gloomy sepulchre of night, surround it with none but hideous sights and sounds, and shroud it in deep despair. While if we pass from the tropical parts of scripture to the more doctrinal and prosaic, and ask reason rather than imagination to be the interpreter, we shall find the idea of punishment exclusively. Thus, for instance, the punishment is uniformly represented as proportioned to the guilt incurred. But were future suffering designed to work the reformation of the offender, it would necessarily have to be proportioned—not to the past conduct at all—but to his then state of mind. Suppose a dozen sinners whose guilt is precisely equal; it is quite conceivable that from many circumstances their several states of mind, when their present probation terminates, may stand at very different degrees in the moral scale. Equally guilty as to the past, it may so happen that they are not then equally hardened in sin. If we may illustrate the various shades of character by imagining a vast number of concentric circles, it is quite conceivable that of the dozen who have heretofore stood together in one and the same, some may pass into the next circle beyond, and others into a still outer one, while some remain stationary; or, in other words, while all are equally criminal if judged by the past, some exceed others in vileness if looked at according to their then state of mind; so that



on the supposition of the next state being corrective, a far less amount of painful discipline would be needful for some than for others, although their past has been alike criminal.

But scripture uniformly represents the degree of punishment as regulated exclusively by what the sinner has been and done during his abode upon earth. Every one is to 'receive according to his deeds'—'according to the deeds done in the body;' he that hath deserved few stripes shall be beaten with few, he that hath merited many shall receive many. Now on the supposition of the next state being mercifully corrective and not punitive, quite another mode of representation would have been the proper one; and there need be no concern at all about the past, but the exact mental or moral condition at the precise moment of judgment would alone require to be considered, for what had been would furnish no criterion whatever. But as the scriptures uniformly represent the whole of the past as taken into account, every thought and word and deed being recorded in the books for the purpose, the inspired doctrine of an exact retribution for the past shuts us up to the belief that it is not a mercifully intended chastening from the hand of a father, but a merited punishment awarded by a judge.

And this brings us to the threshold of another argument. For seeing that the scriptures nowhere intimate that there shall be anything beside the mere penalty threatened; nowhere let fall a hint of instruction, exhortation, entreaty, and the various other means mercifully adopted on earth to reclaim the wanderer, and of which we may say with Elihu, Lo all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living, (for I think no one will affirm that there is a single passage in the bible conveying the idea of any kind of pains-taking with the lost; all the texts quoted in support of the doctrine of restoration being those which speak of 'the restitution of all things'—of Christ's 'drawing all men unto him'—of 'subduing all things unto himself,' which belong to another head of argument, and do not affect the present assertion, which is simply that all the passages bearing on the subject convey the exclusive idea of unmixed and mere punishment,) we are forcibly reminded of the fact that—



§ *d.* There is no tendency in mere suffering to effect that moral change which the sinner must experience, in order to happiness and fitness for heaven.

Nor will this assertion be affected by the fact that affliction is often one means which God makes effectual to the conversion of a sinner on earth. Here no one is exposed to mere suffering, for here there is hope for the vilest, and he is entreated, even at the eleventh hour, to flee to Christ for refuge, and to lay hold on eternal life. Here he has a bible full of pathetic invitations to a throne of grace, and a merciful influence is put forth by God to open his heart that he may attend to the things which belong to his everlasting peace. So that no reference to the beneficial effects of affliction in the present state at all touches the question; and seeing the scriptures are perfectly silent as to any means of grace vouchsafed in the world of woe, and that the idea of these is altogether gratuitous, I feel at liberty to repeat that the notion of the next world being a place of kind though painful discipline where all, even the vilest, will sooner or later see the folly of sin, and turn from it with true and permanent repentance, and acquire pleasing habits of virtue which will render them objects of the divine complacency, and fit subjects for a world of perfect purity and bliss, so that all men are on their way to heaven, only some will have to pass a time in hell to fit them for it, seems to contradict reason as well as scripture, seeing, as suggested, there is no tendency in mere suffering to alter the moral tastes of the sinner. For,—

Sin consists in a wrong state of the affections, not merely in a mistaken judgment. A man may be thoroughly convinced of what is wise and right and good, on the one hand, and what is foolish and wrong and evil, on the other, and yet the clearest conviction will not alter his bias; he may and often does still prefer what his judgment disapproves. Take any confirmed sinner, one that is pursuing a course which all men would pronounce vicious, and unwise even; does the man keep on his course because his judgment approves it; or because inclination triumphs over his convictions of right? We all know that men are impelled by their affections rather than their judgments, and that it is one thing to convince and another to persuade.

Now what ground is there for assuming that a severer discipline than anything found on earth will change the

affections of the sinner, and make him in love with holiness and with a holy God? Does mere suffering ever effect this in the present state? When a vicious man has fairly ruined his constitution by excesses, and is suffering in his own person the fearful consequences of his conduct, what do we find? that he is gradually becoming enamored of virtue?—that the worn out sensualist begins to love purity of heart? Our appeal is to all who know the world, whether the very opposite is not the case; whether there is not rather bitter regret that it is no longer possible to do as he has done, and the wish that he could still sin on, without check or suffering. Still the vice is loved, though the consequences are bitterly cursed.

There is no tendency in mere suffering to change the affections. Vows of reformation, indeed, we have heard often enough when the miserable man has been racked with pain; but how frequently, though suffering is not alone here, was it all an outside reformation that was promised; the heart remained unchanged, and with returning health there was a relapse into former habits, which became more thoroughly confirmed than ever.

And are we not always expressing our conviction that the season of suffering is not favorable for religious impressions? and have not those of most experience, the least hope of effecting any real change in the mind of one who is racked with pain on a bed of sickness? A death-bed repentance we none of us lay much stress upon. Why then read the lessons of experience backward when we speak of the next state? for the condition of the wicked in the next world, while being lasts, is invariably represented as one of unmingled anguish; the Saviour, setting it forth by the common metaphor of fire, represents that not a drop of water will be vouchsafed to cool the burning tongue. What tendency has this to bring the sinner back to the love of God, I ask. The Apocalypse represents the natural effects of judgments poured out on some who had set themselves against God,—‘And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, who hath power over these plagues; and they repented not, to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their

sores, and repented not of their deeds.'—'And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague of the hail was exceeding great,' xvi. 9, 10, 11, 21. It seems then perfectly unphilosophical, contrary to all reason and to experience, to believe that severer discipline will of itself alter the moral tastes of sinners.

§ *e.* Conscience, whenever allowed to speak fairly, testifies to the same effect, by impressing upon the mind a sense of guilt, which anticipates punishment. And when men are thoroughly awakened to a consciousness of their real character as sinners against God (while they earnestly deplore their present moral state, it is true, and anxiously enquire how they can become perfect in virtue, yet) they ask first and with more terrible intensity,—what they must do to be saved? how they can become just with God? Past sinfulness rises up before the mind as deserving to be visited with judgment; and the anxious question is,—How shall I get my sins forgiven? while the earnest prayer is, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord.' And this sense of obnoxiousness to punishment is found over the whole globe, everywhere bespeaking the existence of law, whether written or otherwise. 'For when the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.' Rom. ii. 14, 15. Which sentence of the apostle reminds us of a forcible remark by Coleridge,—

"How deeply seated the conscience is in the human soul, is seen in the effect which sudden calamities produce on guilty men, even when unaided by any determinate notion or fears of punishment after death. The wretched criminal, as one rudely awakened from a long sleep, and half recollecting, half striving to recollect, a fearful something he knows not what, but which he will recognise as soon as he hears the name, already interprets the calamities into *judgments*, executions of a sentence passed by an *invisible* judge; as if the vast pyre of the last judgment were already kindled in an unknown distance, and some flashes of it, darting forth at intervals beyond the rest, were flying and

lighting on the face of his soul. The calamity may consist in loss of fortune, or character, or reputation; but you hear no *regrets* for him. Remorse extinguishes all regret, and remorse is the *implicit* creed of the guilty.”\*

If any one should attempt to evade the conclusion to be obviously drawn from this universal sense of guilt, by ascribing it to ‘priestcraft,’—a very favorite device with many,—I would simply ask whether it is not somewhat more philosophical, to say the least, to deduce priestcraft from the wide-spread sense of spiritual want already existent, and of which bad men in every age have taken advantage, than to assert that a few cunning men in every country have persuaded the masses to believe themselves obnoxious to the anger of God. I would yield to no man in a settled hatred to priestcraft, in all its forms, but I must confess to a wish to be found on the side of historical and philosophical truth; and it appears to me about as reasonable to maintain that bakers have banded together, cunningly to persuade men into a belief of hunger, or physicians to persuade us into a belief of disease, as that the universal sense of guilt had its origin in a conspiracy of priests! But I am aware that in some schools,—highly ‘rational’ no doubt,—this facile and very convenient mode of reasoning, which simply consists in changing cause and effect, and putting the one for the other, is not so difficult of adoption as common mortals might suppose.

There is another illustration, which most readers will consider to be perfectly legitimate; namely,—That

§ *f.* Satan and his angels have now been, for these six thousand years cast out of heaven, and treated as enemies to God and holiness. They have lost all the happiness they once enjoyed, and their souls are filled with the deepest bitterest sense of wretchedness. What effect has been produced on them by their long banishment from the seats of blessedness? On the hypothesis we are considering, some effect ought to have been produced ere this, one would think; for if six thousand years of punishment, at the least, have not availed, in some degree, to soften the minds of the devil and his associates, there can be no ground for believing that another six thousand would. And scripture shows that even at the final consummation of all things,

\* Aids to Reflection.



when this world's history shall come to a close, Satan and his angels will even then,—and God only knows how many long, long ages shall intervene first,—be found as obdurate as ever, and as confirmed in their malicious hatred to God and holiness.

§ *g.* All the Circumstances of the Case make the supposition in the highest degree improbable. Into that world of sin and misery are to be cast all that have persisted in neglecting Christ and his salvation. The description of characters that will be found there is given in terms of terrible significance by inspired men, as for example,—‘The unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars,—For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie.’ Rev. xxi. 8.—xxii. 15. There will be no pious God-fearing person among all the host of the condemned; none of those restraints which the presence of the virtuous in some degree ever interpose; while closely mixed up with base and godless men will be those beings who, unseen heretofore, have taken a malignant pleasure in tempting them to sin. I ask what greater probability is there that such a world will be a more successful training place for heaven than earth has been, than there is that a licentious mind will acquire purity in the haunts of vice, when virtuous society and all pleasant inducements have failed? Yes, when one that has been given to dishonesty, while surrounded by the just and good, becomes honest when all virtuous society is left behind, and he is linked in with older and more experienced rogues, then can we understand how a world where all is sin, and where virtue hath no place, shall be so good a school for acquiring the love of God and holiness, as that at length not one solitary sinner shall be found.

I must confess myself—(more especially when I think of the powerful and well-adapted means that are unsuccessful here—the oracles of God speaking in every variety of tone—the voice of mercy entreating sinners to be reconciled to God—the cross erected to attract the eye and win the heart, so that well may Jehovah ask, What more could I do that I have not done? and well exclaim, ‘Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought

all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me earnestly, but they shall not find me: for they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.' (Prov. i. 24—31.)—I say I must confess myself utterly unable to comprehend how the hell of scripture is at all regardable as a school of virtue where the discipline, however painful, is nevertheless so successful in every instance that sooner or later all the impious are subdued and softened and purified and elevated, and rendered meet for an inheritance among the saints in light, on which they accordingly enter amid the congratulations of the universe. A thought so pleasant, indeed, that could we only find it in our sacred books, none should proclaim it with a greater emphasis of delight.

Were it referred indeed to our imagination to invent an abode for the impenitent, we might with a touch of the wand conjure up a scene that should beautifully harmonise with this milder view; but between the refined purgatory of our poetic fancy, and the Tartarus of revelation, what concord would there be? And no proposals have been issued to us to design for the court of heaven the prison of the universe, but the Great Architect hath himself arranged all things according to the counsel of his own will, and hath laid the foundations in the abyss, and built the walls thereof with stones of darkness, and fixed therein immoveable as fate the everlasting chains; and sent his heralds to proclaim his righteous will, and to beseech men, as though God did himself beseech by them, not to rush upon their doom, but to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life, by gratefully embracing the cross of Christ. But the messengers of his will are unequivocally to declare that, while God is love, and while he sweareth by himself he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather he should turn and live,—yet the day of mercy wanes apace, the open door of heavenly blessedness will in the fulness of time be for ever

shut, and all whose impenitence and unbelief have excluded them therefrom shall find themselves in 'outer darkness,' where 'the wrath of God abideth on them;' 'there remaineth only a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries;' and 'they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.' Thus shall they indeed 'eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.'

And thus taking counsel not of fancy but of fact, seeking a decision only from the oracle on Sion hill,—noting the perfect silence of scripture as to any remedial agency or means to be employed and any deliverance of the condemned from their chains of darkness, while, on the contrary, the carefully selected terms employed, with the general tone adopted by inspired men, the inadequacy of suffering to effectuate a moral change as illustrated amongst men and by the history of fallen angels, the testimony of conscience, and the nature of law whose proper guard is punishment, testify against it,—we find ourselves able to reach no other conclusion than that the next state is one exclusively of retribution; that it is not paternal chastening with which the wicked are visited with a view to reclaim them, but in the strictest sense it is punishment that is deservedly inflicted.

Oh that men were wise! that they understood these things, and, recognising the present as their only probationary state, from which their future must derive all its color, would apply their hearts to understanding, and, while yet the day of salvation lasts, would lay hold on eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever.





PART THE SECOND.

“Sane cum in omnibus literis meis, non solum pium lectorem, sed etiam liberum correctorem desiderem, multo maxime in his ubi ipsa magnitudo quæstionis utinam tam multos inventores habere potest, quam multos contradictores habet. Veruntamen sicut lectorem meum nolo mihi esse deditum, ita correctorem nolo sibi. Ille me non amet amplius quam catholicam fidem; iste se non amet amplius quam catholicam veritatem. Sicut illi dico, Noli meis literis quasi canonicis scripturis inservire; sed in illis et quod non crederis cum inveniris incunctanter crede, in istis autem quod certum non habebas, nisi certum intellexeris, noli firmiter retinere: ita isti dico, Noli meas literas ex tua opinione, vel contentione, sed ex divina lectione, vel inconcussa ratione, corrigere. Si quid in eis veri comprehenderis, existendo non est meum, at intelligendo et amando et tuum sit et meum. Si quid autem falsi conviceris, errando fuerit meum, sed jam cavendo nec tuum sit nec meum.” *August. De Trin. lib. iii.*

“Whoever is afraid of submitting any question, civil or religious, to the test of free discussion, seems to me to be more in love with his own opinion than with truth.” *Bishop Watson.*

## PART SECOND.

---

### CHAPTER THE FIRST.

---

**INTRODUCTORY.** Popular belief of eternal misery dissented from—Responsibility of so differing recognised—Counterbalancing considerations—Burden of proof with whom—Evidence necessary to establish the common doctrine—If contained in scripture easily and variously proved—and more forcibly established by being called in question—Truth alone desirable.

It is with feelings of deep and even painful anxiety that I approach that part of our subject which is now before us. With the preceding chapters my brethren will for the most part agree, and may possibly accept them as some little service rendered to the common cause. Here, however, the approval of many will terminate, and with not a few will be exchanged for something worse than the opposite. Still I must proceed, for Truth, as I believe, beckons me on. Let me reverently follow. Yet how can I be insensible to the fact that the direction in which my guide is leading me, is scarcely that in which many of my brethren affirm Truth to lead? Beyond a doubt the opinions of wise and good men are entitled to respectful attention, and it is a grave consideration that the majority of christian people have adopted views which I find myself bound to reject; how then shall I not be sensitively alive to the circumstances of my position? Have so many of the wisest and best of men been left in error, men too whom God has signally honored? Have they been for the most part mistaking the voice of the oracle, and misinterpreting the counsels of heaven on this solemn subject? Painfully and oppressively do I feel this *argumentum ad verecundiam*.

But, on the other hand, are not the best of men fallible? And have not many of the wisest given strange proof of their fallibility? Did not nearly all the wise and good once believe, with Pascal and Fenelon, in transubstantiation and all the other dogmas of the Romish church? Did even the mighty Luther, did the Reformers, achieve their perfect emancipation from all forms of error, and leave no work of reformation for their successors? What shall we say to the consubstantiation of the former, and to the dark doctrine of reprobation so tenaciously held in the stern and iron age that Geneva, Scotland, and even England knew? Why to this day it is Church of England orthodoxy to believe that no one can be saved who doubts the Athanasian creed;\* and fifteen thousand clergyman now living have solemnly sworn their assent and consent to that perilous assertion. It is true? Nor is it so long since it was held sound doctrine among many of the evangelical dissenters that God had provided no Saviour for mankind at large, but only for a little flock, a chosen few; and it was heresy to maintain that there were glad tidings for every creature. And still the innumerable controversies, which are maintained with a spirit that only too well justifies the current phrase, *odium theologicum*, show how marvellously small is every man's belief in another's infallibility, and may keep the writer in countenance in replying to any who shall unreasonably press the opinions of individuals or communities, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?'

Besides, is it not our protestant boast, too often indeed a mere empty boast, *vox et preterea nihil*, that 'the bible, and the bible alone, &c.,' and have we not for this aphorism, admirable if only it were true, complacently decreed the apotheosis of the author of so gratifying a period? Let it not then be deemed *quite* an unpardonable sin if we venture to construe the assertion literally, and so, pushing our way through all that look infallibility, exercise our right of sitting at the feet of the great teacher, whose words—Call no man your father on earth, no man your

\* Most readers will remember that the Athanasian creed professes to set forth "the Catholick faith," but in reality is chiefly occupied with a sort of philosophy, falsely so called, of the divine essence, unintelligible and contradictory, of which it daringly affirms "Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly!"

master, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren,—were spoken not to be eulogised on holiday occasions, or when they may serve a turn, but to be recognised as a daily rule of life; “He is our master in abstract speculation—our master in religious belief—our master in morals, and in the ordering of every day’s affairs.”

Again, is not theology a science? Is not the word of God better understood now than in any age since the apostolic? And if no one competently informed will dispute this, let us ask ourselves whether we have reached the *Ultima Thule* of religious truth, so that in the ages to come, those glorious ages! there will be no discoveries to reward the diligent, and all the people of God will have nothing to do but re-publish and stereotype for all time the theological works of the present day! Believe it who can. Rather is the book of revelation perfect. In those unutterably more glorious eras that are in reserve for the church, there will be no other bible than our own to exercise the loftier powers of our happier successors to the end of the world. Nor needs it. Even in the latest age of all, the wise householder shall bring out thereof ‘things both new and old;’ and that prayer of the psalmist shall never be in vain, Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. And just as we have been compelled somewhat to modify the theology of a former day, deeming ourselves more favored than our honored forefathers, so will the holy men of a coming age take leave to consider some of the things most surely believed amongst us, not proven, while they will also bring into luminous prominence some mighty truths which the popular theology of the nineteenth century dooms to unwise neglect.

There is still another consolation. Truth can stand any test. The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, and purified seven times. No weapon formed there-against shall prosper. This is my comfort. And if the popular doctrine of the real eternity (not of punishment but) of torment be of God, it cannot be overthrown. It will be the more plainly demonstrated the more it is examined, and will stand out in the bolder relief from the feebleness of the opposing arguments. The orthodox have nothing to fear. Let them put their confidence in truth, and in the God of truth. They have



beside almost all christendom, ostensibly, at all events, on their part. They can well afford therefore to be calm and fair and temperate and just; they might well afford even more than this.

On the other hand, if the prevailing notion be of man;—if it be some not much examined doctrine that has come down to us from the darker ages, some unpurged-away result of the former universality of a system to which the largest inventable amount of terror was indispensable;—if, from various circumstances, the religious world have adopted it with far less of rigid investigation than they have been compelled to give to other doctrines;—if it cannot be maintained by the fair application of those sound hermeneutical principles which are the support of the rest of the evangelical system;—and if the same sort of reasoning by which this notion is elicited from a few texts would, to a great extent subvert the very system of which it is made a part; if all, or only some of this be so, then, whatever of obloquy may be heaped upon me, or however forgetful some of my brethren may be of the law of kindness and the higher law of truth, it will ultimately be seen that no disservice, but the contrary, has been done to the great cause of evangelical religion, which I would a thousand times rather die than injure.

But not to prolong these introductory observations, let us pass on to a necessary but brief remark concerning

### § THE BURDEN OF PROOF.

“It is a point of great importance to decide in each case, at the outset, in your own mind, and clearly to point out to the hearer, as occasion may serve, on which side the presumption lies, and to which belongs the [onus probandi] *Burden of proof*. For though it may often be expedient to bring forward more proofs than can fairly be demanded of you, it is always desirable when this is the case that it should be *known*, and that the strength of the cause should be estimated accordingly.”\*

The eminent writer from whom this just remark is quoted, and to whom the present age owes so large a debt of obliga-

\* Dr. Whately's Rhetoric, part I. chap. iii. § 2.

tion, has however laid down a principle from which, though with great diffidence, I must profess my entire dissent; namely, that the *onus* lies with him who calls in question any received doctrine. Surely he who affirms a thing is bound to make good his assertion. Till proved, it is nothing but his mere *ipse dixit*; and I am not to be called on to believe it, or else be held bound to disprove it. I await the proof; when furnished, if sufficient, I believe; but not till then. Instead, however, of my attempting here what is already done to hand for us, and by a writer of no ordinary acuteness, the reader will pardon my referring him to a work in which this point is argued, and to my mind decided.\*

The burden of proof then lies with those who assert that never-ending torment is in reserve for multitudes of God's intelligent, but alas! rebellious creatures. If they affirm this appalling idea, they are bound to make it good. They must bring forth their strong reasons. If it be the doctrine of revelation the proof lies at hand, and can be easily produced. Till this is done, not merely is no man bound to believe it; he ought not to believe; he must wait for the evidence. Let us therefore recognise

#### § THE KIND OF EVIDENCE DEMANDED.

As the burden of proof as a whole lies with the asserters of the popular doctrine, so does it at every stage of the argument. They must make good their footing step by step from the beginning to the end. With mathematical precision must they advance, till in the face of all men they are entitled to crown their work with the letters it has often been so delightful to pronounce—Q. E. D. I have never seen this done yet. To my mind there has been a serious flaw in all the evidence hitherto presented; and I am sometimes lost in astonishment that in so solemn an argument, one so overwhelmingly awful, evidence should be admitted as satisfactory, of a kind which would never be employed on

\* Baptism, in its Mode and Subjects, by Alexander Carson. L. L. D. Chap. I. As it is only for the sake of this valuable chapter that the author refers to a work on this controverted subject, about which more than enough has been written, he hopes to be safe from misconstruction with the candid reader, who will do himself a wrong if he fail to satisfy his mind on so important a point as that alluded to.

behalf of the grand truths of the gospel; and for this reason, that the great evangelical verities are so abundantly proved, that the believer feels that he can afford to cast away everything that is even but slightly doubtful. For the divinity of Christ, for example, we would not sigh if enlightened criticism deprived us of fifty texts which it may have been the custom to quote in its defence. We would exult rather to be disencumbered of all that could be fairly questioned, though ever so slightly. We deem the great mystery of godliness to be like the name wrought in the shield of Phidias; and we can be calm and just and kind to an opponent. But how is it with the doctrine in question? Where is that generosity towards an ingenuous enquirer, who is in doubt, which confidence in the abundance, the variety, the force of evidence so notoriously inspires?

Assuredly, if it be the doctrine of scripture, it is plainly taught in our sacred records, and in various ways. We shall not be shut up to an equivocal word or two in a comparatively few texts; but it will somehow or other be involved in different lines of argument, the logical force of which will necessitate our understanding it just so.\* But what is the fact of the present case? Take away the proof sought to be derived from the phrase 'everlasting punishment' (which we shall not find on a candid examination to necessitate the belief) and a few similar expressions, which may be opposed by expressions of an opposite character, and what is left? Where are the lines of argument, the trains of reasoning adopted in the scriptures, which only give out a fair meaning when this doctrine is deduced? like an elaborate lock which will open only by the application of the proper key, so that the key is thereby authenticated as genuine. I submit therefore—

1. That it is not enough for any party to bring forward passages of scripture, and cast them before us in their baldness, as foreclosing all discussion. For there are other classes of texts which would not be allowed to prove anything if produced in the same bald manner. If the uni-

\* In argument with 'the common people' how do we substantiate the views we present on the great leading truths? Assuredly not by philological niceties, nor by laying the stress on mere words that look to teach a certain doctrine, but by masses of arguments from scripture that demonstrate the indispensableness of just such or such a view.

versalist, for example, should adduce, as proving his theory, such texts as these—the restitution of all things; ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me;’ ‘God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth;’ ‘He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy;’—then the orthodox would promptly and properly demand that all such passages should be examined in their connection, that the precise value of each should be separately ascertained, that they should be compared with and, if necessary, modified by other statements. But the principle which is sound to-day against one view, is sound to-morrow even if it make against another view, and sound every day. So that,—

2. Prior to any investigation of the proper force of terms as employed by the inspired writers, the mere assertion of ‘everlasting punishment,’ and the like, on the one hand, is sufficiently met, on the other, by the assertion that the wicked ‘shall be punished with everlasting destruction,’ that they shall ‘utterly perish,’ and similar declarations. If the phrase *everlasting destruction* is not allowed to settle the entire question at once, so neither can the phrase *everlasting punishment*. If one party hold up the one text as decisive, another party may as fairly hold up the other as decisive. But certainly, prior to investigating the proper force of terms, there would, to say the least, be an equilibrium established; or rather, since destruction would be punishment, and everlasting destruction would be therefore everlasting punishment, the balance (more especially considering that both texts are thus interpreted by one and the same principle) would incline against the notion of an eternity of misery.

3. In order, then, satisfactorily to place with the truths which have a right to be most surely believed among us, the doctrine of a real eternity of conscious torment, the preachers thereof must show from scripture,—

That when Christ stands forth, not merely as the deliverer from woe and blank despair and second death, but also as the giver of eternal life to his followers, this magnificent promise cannot possibly be understood literally, but must of necessity be interpreted metaphorically. To the honor which he seems so frequently to assume, as the dispenser of immortality, it must be shown that he has no title; so that those who have bent the knee to him for this unutterably grand



endowment, which more than any other makes us partakers of the divine nature, must recall that portion of the homage which we have rendered to him as emphatically, 'Christ our Life;' for that while we derive our happiness from him, we wear our crown of immortality quite independently of him, and thus the Prince of Life, who has 'upon his head many crowns,' has in reality one less than his words had led us to believe. And then they must show,—

That when the God of truth threatens the sinner with *destruction*, in many mutually consistent passages, the terms employed cannot be understood literally, but must be understood metaphorically. Which must be either because man is necessarily indestructible; or, because the Judge will not exert the power he possesses to destroy; or, will exert his power to prevent the sinner naturally dying out of existence, and so will by an act of omnipotence keep him alive for ever and ever in order to torment him! And in reference to this last idea the remark may be suffered, That the sinner is either necessarily immortal, (which will scarcely be affirmed) or else he is immortal only by the will and conversation of God. So that the above awful inference is just (and truth can rejoice in undisguised phraseology) that God will, of his own free act, uphold in life for ever and ever the unhappy sinner, for no other purpose than to punish him.

Verily the evidence for this had need be strong. It is not metaphysical subtleties, nor even philological niceties (invaluable in their place) that must build the height of this great argument; but mighty masses of obvious truth must be piled upon a mountain base, to raise this everlasting pyramid of infinitely more than sepulchral gloom, which is for ever and for evermore to throw its dark and appalling shadow across the universe of God.

We know indeed from the oracles of truth that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' And knowing 'the terrors of the Lord' we daily beseech our fellows to flee from the wrath to come. But while we scruple never to use any language which the Most High has employed in his revelation of mercy, and ascribe to him all the titles that he claims—Father—Lawgiver—Judge,—we nowhere find him set forth as purposely prolonging the existence of his wretched victims—drawing



it out, of his own freewill, age after age, to all eternity, in order that he may fill and saturate it with most exquisite and unutterable and unceasing misery.

We say that a theory like this, which presents the righteous God under such a terrific aspect,—which secures the never-ending existence of sin and suffering in a universe presided over by wisdom and justice and love and mercy,—which if really credited by any of us (in the present state at all events) might well make reason more than totter on her throne, and convert all christendom into one mighty maniac cell, where, in the grasp of the demon of terror, the most benevolent would be the most hopelessly affrighted,—we say that such an appalling theory, pregnant with horrors which no created being can by any means represent to his mind (for the vastest conceptions which the mightiest intelligences form of eternity is of necessity short of the true idea by a whole infinity) had need be sustained by evidence proportionately strong.

Assuredly if it be a truth it is second to none on the page of revelation; eclipsed by none more momentous; but rather does itself overtop and overshadow almost every other. Surely the disciple of Christ, who is ardently solicitous to see the universal spread of a vital christianity, will in an answerable degree be concerned, as, on the one hand, not to diminish aught from that salutary amount of terror which the infinite wisdom has exhibited, so, on the other, not to overlay and burden the gospel revelation with more of the terrific than its blessed author—the only wise God—has seen fit to embody therein.

And as every word that God has uttered must be true, and every decision of his will the dictate of profoundest wisdom, the exact truth that lies in the volume of revelation, whatever that may be, must be precisely that which above all human computation is the most admirably adapted to produce the largest amount of varied good, if only it can be discovered and brought to bear on the judgments and consciences and affections of men. The purer the truth we exhibit, the mightier and more extensive its blessed results. And in proportion to the magnitude of any truth, and its bearing on the character of God, on the honor of his government and the welfare of man, will generally be its evidence; the more important, the more clearly will it stand revealed. What christian wishes to blink the ques-

tion of the genuineness and authenticity of the scriptures? Who turns pale with fear, and entreats men to hush and drop the subject, when the Creatorship of the Son of God, or the fact of an atonement for sin, or of justification by faith, or of a benign and heavenly influence exerted on the minds and hearts of men, is spoken of? Or which of the subjects, that we are intelligently confident are taught in scripture, do we pray and plot to have tabooed? Or what man living deprecates the most searching investigation into anything he thoroughly believes? And the more important it is, and the more abundant and clear its evidences, the more calmly and rejoicingly do we court enquiry. We christians care, or at least profess to care, for nothing but truth. Let us have it at whatever cost, and as pure as may be, fresh welling up from the sacred fount.

Yes, if the doctrine of never-ending torment for innumerable myriads of God's creatures be indeed contained in scripture, beyond a doubt it will be found repeated over and over again, with every variety of phrase and of diligently sought illustration. It will be indissolubly entwined in numerous arguments; will be the only fair result to which various lines of apostolic reasoning conduct. Concede text after text, it will still remain. Such a portentous truth cannot be dimly set forth. We ask then for the massive arguments to be produced; and we almost venture to ask for that manly and christian bearing in the discussion which the holders of divine truth so naturally exhibit.

And let it be pardoned the writer if he add, that it is not the misrepresentation of our views and arguments—not angry protestations against universalism—nor insinuations against our orthodoxy—nor unworthy assertions that our doctrine is all delectable to the sinner—nor presumptuous declamation that, if we be correct, then “the death of Christ was too costly an atonement,” and that “another Saviour is provided for the sinner,” and that “God was cruel to his Son,”—it is not exactly this kind of thing (of which there has been no lack) that so grave an argument demands, or by which the sacred cause of truth can be advanced. Let not the weapons of our warfare be thus carnal, lest the Master reprove us saying, ‘Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.’

## CHAPTER THE SECOND.

---

Will the sinner exist for ever in misery—Previous question,—Is every man immortal—Arguments in favor from reason considered, namely, First argument, The immateriality of the soul—Second, The general belief and desire of immortality—Third, The capacities of the soul—Fourth, Tendency to progression—Fifth, The analogies presented in nature—Sixth, The anomalies of the present state—Testimony of Professors Stuart and others—Conclusion.

For a satisfactory decision on the solemn question,—Whether the sinner will exist for ever in misery, our dependence must of course be upon the testimony of scripture alone, to which therefore it behoves us to betake ourselves with childlike docility. It were indeed arrogance of the most reprehensible kind to determine beforehand what answer the oracle ought to give. Let us propose our question in the temple of truth, let us pause in reverent silence for the reply, and departing rest assured that the oracle never can deceive.

But are we quite prepared to enter within the veil with such a question, or is something like preparation requisite? Instead of rushing thoughtlessly into the temple, would it not be fitting to understand well beforehand the question we are about to propose; seeing that if, for want of thought, we have assumed as necessarily true something which is by no means proved, then, though the inspired decision be of necessity true, yet the prepossession in our own minds will not only prevent our rightly understanding the reply, but even necessitate our misapprehending it. Let us suppose, for instance, that it is taken for granted, without sufficient reason, that every man must live for ever;—in other words, that every man is already endowed with

immortality. And suppose (I put it only hypothetically at present) that this is a mere assumption. Then if the oracle doom the sinner to 'everlasting punishment,' the sentence, though true as intended, would not be true as understood; for our assumption of his immortality, introducing a new element not recognised by the authority, would put an utterly incorrect face on the decision.

Now it does appear to me that this question is generally overlooked, and that it is too easily taken for granted that the sinner is immortal. But is not this too important an element in the enquiry to be assumed as indisputable? So, I must confess, it seems to me; and we shall find it facilitate our subsequent progress, if we give a little attention to this preliminary question.

And our inquiry may proceed thus:—

1. CAN REASON (INDEPENDENTLY OF REVELATION) PROVE MAN TO BE IMMORTAL?

And if not,—

2. DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH THAT IMMORTALITY IS THE ABSOLUTE AND INALIENABLE PORTION OF EVERY MAN?—OF MAN, THAT IS, AS MAN?

But before we enter on the brief examination of the first question, which will occupy the present chapter, one or two preliminary remarks may be permitted. For example: The appeal ought to be to Reason unaided by Revelation. Now certainly what the reason of man could of itself accomplish, was attained by the venerable sages of antiquity. And so it would be every way satisfactory to make to them especially, or even exclusively, the appeal as to the discoveries of reason touching the immortality of man. And thus in the first instance the inquiry might well assume a historical complexion. But this advantageous method of proceeding may be waived, and the student referred among others to one especially who has treated the subject in his own masterly style. Dr. Whately has satisfactorily shown\* that the doctrine of a proper immortality was not really established among the ancients. And indeed one might expect every disciple of Christ would be ready cheerfully to concede

\* 'Essays on some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion,' Essay I. On a Future State.



that, as it was not discovered, so neither is it discoverable by reason; seeing that, while conjecture is not proof, and guesses are not discoveries, 'Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.'

It is also one thing to show that it is not impossible,—not improbable even,—and quite another thing to prove the doctrine. Now if it should be asserted that death is the utter destruction and entire end of man, against such a conclusion reason might allege considerations so strong as to render the assertion highly presumptuous.

But it is one thing to stop this assertion, and another to prove man immortal. Let it be remembered that a future state of existence is not to be confounded with immortality, as though they were one and the same. Yet many of the arguments which have been adduced in support of the doctrine of immortality, have really been no more than arguments in favor of a future state; which is quite another thing. An argument may be good in support of the latter, which has not the least bearing on the former. And yet how frequently have these two very different things been confounded.

And before we proceed let us distinctly understand again with whom lies the burden of proof, so that the precise task to be performed may be properly recognised. We are inquiring whether reason can *prove* man to be immortal: so that the ground I occupy is that of a respondent to an affirmant. I suppose some one to affirm man to be immortal, for such and such reasons. All that it behoves me therefore to do is to point out the inconclusiveness of the arguments employed. I am not called on here to affirm anything to the contrary myself; as the natural mortality of the soul, for instance. To repeat what has been said on a previous page,—the individual who affirms is bound to proof. And I am induced to remind the reader of this, because some of my reviewers take shelter under the assertion that the *onus probandi* rests with me; and call upon me to establish "the natural mortality of the soul," on the plea that the assertion "that the soul is immortal, is, disguise it how we may, unquestionably a negative proposition, which can only be overturned by positive proof that it dies:"\*—a remark at which it may

\* Congregational Magazine for January, 1845.



be allowed to express surprise, seeing it is not true, either popularly or logically.\*

For assuredly the word itself, 'immortal,' while of course negative by its prefix, is by the *usus loquendi* affirmative in its value, meaning that which shall live for ever. And indeed the popular doctrine is boldly and exclusively affirmative, thus,—All men shall live for ever; The wicked shall live for ever in a state of torment. So that the *onus*, after all, rests with those who affirm it, and all that can be argumentatively required of me is to point out wherein the favorite arguments fail. If infinite existence be not proved, the popular doctrine breaks down of itself, and prior to any proof that may hereafter be offered of cessation of existence.

But as in every controversy it is of the last importance to have a clear idea of the terms employed, let us distinctly recognise the meaning to be attached to the word immortal, and immortality. Which is the more necessary, inasmuch as another reviewer has ingeniously made out that if God should deprive the sinner of existence by way of punishment, this very deprivation is a proof of immortality!†

By immortality, then, is meant—one who will live for ever: and by immortality, never-ending existence. He is immortal, not who *might have lived* for ever, but for certain reasons will not, but only he who positively *shall live* for ever. And thus our great lexicographer gives it, and in agreement with him the various encyclopædists.‡

What then have been the arguments mainly relied on in

\* Since the reviewer, in the next sentence, talks about "syllogisms in Barbara," &c. he may be reminded that as to the *quality* of the proposition,—The soul is immortal, i. e. not mortal,—it is either affirmative or negative, according as the negative is attached to the predicate or copula. And we have not to "disguise it" in any way, in order to make it affirmative; but simply to consider the negative as attached to the predicate, instead of the copula, and it is done; standing thus,—The soul is not-mortal.

† Eclectic Review for August, 1845, p. 163.

‡ Immortal. Exempt from death; never to die; never-ending; perpetual. *Johnson.*

Immortal. Exempt from death; being never to die; perpetual. *London Encyclopædia.*

Immortal. That which will last to all eternity, as having in it no principal of alteration or corruption. *Ency. Brit.*

Immortality. Exemption from death; life never to end. *Johnson.*

Immortality. The condition of that which is not subject to death. *Popular Encyclopædia.*

proof of man's immortality, independently of those found in the volume of inspiration? As we must confine ourselves to a selection, the least objectionable and most depended on may alone be adduced; and as I can but name the argument, so I must content myself with merely suggesting the reply, having come to attach but small importance comparatively to the metaphysical process, and basing my own hope of immortality on the 'more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as to a light which shineth in a dark place.'

The First argument is,—THE IMMATERIALITY OF THE SOUL.

On which, waiving the remark that we neither know what matter is, nor what spirit is, but only some of the attributes or qualities of each, I submit—

a. That, so far from proving all men to be immortal, its utmost value is this,—that since the nature of the soul is probably distinct from that of the body, so may be its destiny. Let the affirmation be held good,—Since the body is material, and the soul may be immaterial,\* the destruction

\* The writer, though as far from being a materialist, as any of his readers, deems himself bound in fairness to present the argument in this form. Knapp has said not badly, "This doctrine respecting the *immateriality* of the soul, in the strict philosophical sense of the term, is of far less consequence to religion than is commonly supposed. The reason why so much importance has been supposed to attach to this doctrine is that it was considered as essential to the metaphysical proof of the *immortality* of the soul. But since the immateriality of the soul, in the strictest sense, can never be made fully and obviously certain, whatever philosophical arguments may be urged in its favor, the proof of *immortality* should not be built upon it. Nor were the fine spun theories of immaterialism ever resorted to by theologians to prove the immortality of the soul, or ascribed by them to the bible, until Hobbes, Toland, De la Mettrie, and other materialists, had so perverted the doctrine of materialism as to deduce from it the destructibility of the soul, or its annihilation at the death of the body. But in truth the immortality of the soul does neither depend for proof upon its immateriality, nor can be certainly deduced from it. It is possible for one to doubt whether the strict immateriality of the soul can be proved, and yet to be convinced of its immortality. The strongest advocates of immateriality must allow that God *might* annihilate a spirit, however simple its nature might be. Why then, on the other hand, *might* he not make a substance not entirely simple, immortal? *Knapp's Christian Theology*."

In accordance with which sentiments Mr. Isaac Taylor says:—"This doctrine concerning what is called the immateriality of the soul, should ever be treated as a merely philosophical speculation, and as unimportant to our christian profession." *Physical Theory*

of the former is no proof of that of the latter. This is all one is entitled to affirm. But this, how far from being a proof of never-ending existence! All that the argument from immateriality can fairly accomplish is to show that death is not necessarily the destruction of the whole man. It is negative rather than positive in its value. But waiving this, and admitting to the very fullest extent the doctrine of immateriality, I observe that;—

b. Fairly put, it equally proves the immateriality of all animals, fishes, reptiles, and insects. For the intelligent reader needs not to be reminded that, by the general admission as well as by proof, they have immaterial souls as truly as ourselves; seeing that they remember, fear, imagine, compare, and manifest gratitude, anger, sorrow, desire, &c.\* And according to Dugald Stuart, “Mind is *that* which feels, which thinks, which has the power of beginning motion: and therefore the proposition that sensation, thought, and the power of beginning motion are attributes of mind, is not a fact resting on experience, but a truth involved in the only notion of mind we possess.” So that the fact of immateriality is of no logical value in our present argument, unless to a reasoner who, not shrinking from assuming a major of most portentous dimensions, will affirm that *all mind is immortal, because immaterial*.

\* “The power and use of phancy is great, even in brute animals, in which it is the chief faculty. Most of them have a good memory, and withal some kind of foresight.” *Dr. Grew, Cosm. Sacra*.

“Birds learning of tunes, and the endeavours one may observe in them to hit the notes right, put it past doubt with me that they have perception, and retain ideas in their memories, and use them for patterns.” “It seems as evident to me that they [beasts] do reason as that they have sense.” *Locke, Essays, &c. b. ii.*

“They who will attribute life, sense, cogitation, consciousness, and self-enjoyment, not without some footsteps of reason many times, to mere organised bodies in brutes, will never be able clearly to defend the incorporeity and immortality of human souls, as most probably they do not intend any such thing. For either all conscious and cogitative beings are incorporeal, or else nothing can be proved to be incorporeal. From whence it would follow also that there is no Deity distinct from the corporeal world.” *Cudworth, Intell. System, vol. i.*

“Sensation is an attribute of mind, and the possession of mind certainly extends as far as its phenomena. Whatever beings have conscious feeling, have, unless the preceding arguments amount to nothing, souls, or immaterial minds, distinct from the substance of which they appear to us to be composed. If all animals feel, all animals have souls.” *Dr Pritchard, on the Vital Principle.*

For, as Warburton says, "I think it may be strictly demonstrated that man has an *immaterial* soul; but then the same arguments which prove *that*, prove likewise that the souls of all living animals are immaterial."

So then he who affirms man to be immortal, *because* of the immateriality of his soul, is bound to affirm the immortality, not only of the nobler animals, but even of the microscopic animalcule. And, so far as mere immateriality is concerned, we may no longer deem it an evidence of a "rude untutored mind" that the "poor Indian should

" — think, admitted to an equal sky,

" His faithful dog shall bear him company."

Nor can this be quashed by the assertion, which is true, (and the full value of which I claim for the views to be subsequently suggested) that God can, if he pleases, make the immaterial soul of the rat or spider cease to exist. For so he can make the immaterial soul of man (too frequently, alas! a mere human reptile) cease to exist also. But this is an entire surrender of the whole argument that man *is* immortal *because* possessed of an immaterial soul. Well has Mr. Isaac Taylor said "As to the pretended demonstrations of immortality drawn from the assumed simplicity and indestructibility of the soul as an immaterial substance, they appear altogether inconclusive, or if conclusive, then such as must be admitted to apply with scarcely diminished force to all sentient orders; and it must be granted that whatever has felt, and has acted spontaneously, must live again and for ever. We have the best reasons for the confident expectation of another life; nor are in any need to fortify our convictions by arguments which if valid prove immensely more than we can desire to see established, or could persuade ourselves to think in any degree probable."\*

The Second argument is that derived from—

THE GENERAL BELIEF IN AND DESIRE OF IMMORTALITY.

This argument consists of two parts, which we must examine separately.

First, then, as to the alleged Universality of the Belief,

§ I think it will be admitted that it is yet to be shown that there has been such a universal belief; except indeed where the precious volume of revelation has cast its golden beam upon the future. If we turn to the classic lands of

\* Physical Theory, p. 254.



Greece and Rome, where, if at all, we might expect to find such a belief wrought into the general mind, who that candidly and impartially examines, uninfluenced by the desire to make out a case, will venture to affirm that there was a general belief in immortality, amongst either those who drank of Ilyssus silvery spring, or those who bathed in the yellow Tiber? Whether we acquaint ourselves with the common people, or listen to the esoteric utterances of the philosophers, we shall alike fail to discover the belief alleged. And in confirmation of my remark I shall cite a few passages from Dr. Whately, as a witness eminently entitled to profound respect.

“When then we find Socrates and his disciples represented by Plato as fully admitting, in their discussion of the subject, that ‘men in general were highly incredulous as to the soul’s future existence,’ and as expecting that ‘it would at the moment of our natural death be dispersed (as he expresses it) like air or smoke, and cease altogether to exist, so that it would require no little persuasion and argument to convince them that the soul can exist after death, and can retain anything of its powers and intelligence;’—when we find this I say asserted or rather alluded to as *notoriously the state of popular opinion*, we can surely entertain but little doubt that the account of Elysium and Tartarus were regarded as mere poetical fables, calculated to amuse the imagination, but unworthy of serious belief.” “So far indeed were the promulgators of Christianity from finding the belief of a future state already well established, that they appear to have had no small difficulty in convincing of this truth even some of their converts.” “It may be said however (and this perhaps is the most prevailing notion) that little as the vulgar believed in the doctrine of a future state, it was received and inculcated by many eminent philosophers. . . . But in reality the doctrine never was either generally admitted among the ancient philosophers, or satisfactorily proved by any of them, even in the opinion of those who argued in favor of it. On the one hand, not only the Epicurean school openly contended against it, but one of much greater weight than any of them, and the founder of a far more illustrious sect, Aristotle, without expressly combating the notion, does much more; he passes it by as not worth considering, and takes for granted the contrary supposition as not needing



proof. He remarks incidentally in his treatise on courage, that 'death is formidable beyond most other evils, on account of its excluding hope; since it is a complete termination, and there does not appear to be *anything either of good or evil* beyond it.'\* And in the same work, in discussing the question whether a man can justly be pronounced happy before the end of his life, he proceeds all along (as indeed is the case throughout) on the supposition that after death a man ceases altogether to exist.† And it should be observed that his incidental and oblique allusion to this latter opinion implies (as I have said) much more than if he had expressly asserted and maintained it; in *that* case he would have borne testimony only to his *own* belief; but as it is, we may collect from his mode of speaking that such was the *prevailing* and generally uncontradicted belief of the rest of the world."‡

To the same effect Leland:—"What that great man Cicero says of the philosophers of his time is remarkable. In that celebrated treatise where he sets himself to prove the immortality of the soul, he represents *the contrary as the prevailing opinion*; that there were crowds of opponents, not the Epicureans only, but, which he could not account for, those that were *the most learned persons had that doctrine in contempt.*"||

These witnesses are true. Wherefore I must profess my conviction that the only proper answer to the present argument is a denial of the premiss; for surely if there were no such universal belief in the heathen world, and in the absence of revelation, it were a little too much to expect me to account for it.

§ We come then to inquire into the nature of this alleged Desire for Immortality, and its proper argumentative value. As employed by all who lay any stress upon it, it stands thus, All men are immortal, because they desire immortality. It is obvious to inquire the basis of this argument. Let us therefore supply the suppressed premiss, and which is evidently this, All men are what they wish to be, or, will have what they desire to have. This is the major that must

\* Arist. Eth. Nicom. b. iii. † Ibid. b. i.

‡ Essays on some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion, Essay I. on a Future State.

|| On the Advantages and Necessity of the Christian Revelation.

be assumed, in order to make room for the minor,—All men desire immortality, and the conclusion, Therefore all men are immortal. So that the fallacy lurks in the suppressed premiss, while even the minor is inaccurately stated. And thus to this argument there are two objections. First: There is no reason for assuming that all men are immortal because they wish to be. For they all, by the very constitution of their minds, desire happiness, yet multitudes neither are nor will be happy. So that if it be asserted that universality of desire is proof of one common origin, and must be traced to him who made us, we reply, So must this instinctive desire for happiness be ascribed to the Author of the Mind; and then, since the happiness so ardently desired is suspended upon conditions, so, for anything the present argument affords, may be the immortality alleged to be desired;\* and, as there may be a universal desire for happiness, and yet multitudes may fail to obtain it (and argumentatively *all* might fail) so, even if there were a universal passion for immortality, many (so far as the present argument is concerned) might come short of it. In other words, the major premiss will be conceded by no man, and so the argument falls.

Secondly: The object of desire is not immortality in the abstract, but immortal *happiness*. Let this be distinctly recognised, and the argument must stand thus, All men are *immortal* because they desire never-ending *happiness*. But those with whom we are arguing deny for immense multitudes the happiness which men do really desire, and affirm for them (because of this desire of eternal happiness) an immortality, not only denuded

\* "If the supposition of a contingent immortality should seem to any a startling novelty, we would request them briefly to consider it not in relation to actual fact, but to probable reason. What is there in itself preposterous in the idea that our Creator may have suspended our immortality on our own endeavors? Does his sincerity require more than this? Do any of his perfections require more than this? It might be difficult to see how he could consistently instil a strong craving for immortality into our bosoms, and yet wholly preclude its enjoyment, but not surely to conceive that he may have made it a prize attainable only by diligent pursuit. The conformity of such a view of the subject to the dictates of natural reason seems even suggested by the language of scripture. A class is recognised (Rom. ii. 7) and spoken of with approbation as '*seeking for themselves glory, honor and immortality*, by a patient continuance in well doing.'" *Dr. Gray.*

of enjoyment, but rendered unutterably dreadful. Yet assuredly whatever argumentative stress a general desire will sustain, belongs properly and exclusively to the very thing desired; and so an opponent ought to affirm,—All men will be happy, because they desire happiness, rather than,—All men will exist for ever, because they desire unending bliss!

§ And as to the alleged desire for immortality, it is by no means universal, nor even general, if we may credit the reviewers. Quite the contrary indeed. For they say that cessation of existence is precisely the very thing that all the wicked eagerly desire, and therefore are only too ready to believe! So intensely do they long for annihilation, according to these gentlemen, that for suggesting even their ‘miserable destruction,’ I am absolutely represented as “providing the ungodly with *another Saviour* than Christ,” and exhibiting God as denouncing “against ungodly men, as a terrific punishment, *what actually is to them the greatest possible good!*” The case then stands thus. Incomparably the larger portion of mankind, hitherto, have been ‘the ungodly;’—these, so far from desiring to live for ever, desire (according to my reviewers) annihilation. So that, if we believe this, the assertion of a general desire for immortality is itself utterly unfounded. I take leave therefore to devolve on those who represent destruction as the very thing the majority of men wish for, the reconciling of this assertion with the argument for immortality, drawn from the alleged universal desire for it. At all events they may not use now the one assertion and anon the opposite.

The Third argument is that founded upon—

#### THE CAPACITIES OF THE SOUL.

This as we all know is capable of being very rhetorically and interestingly presented, and is at the same time an argument so pleasing and flattering to us, that we naturally regard it with considerable complacency. But we are asking for Proofs; and it is evident that proof is not here. At least not proof of that which is asserted, and which is—not that man is capable of immortality, if God please, nor that God may and will render multitudes actually immortal, but that—Every man, because of his capacities, as he now is, is already endowed with immortality. And then I ask

*a.* If some men have exhibited great capacities, have all? Have the majority, even? or, rather, is it not an almost infinitesimally small proportion of mankind that have manifested those capacities on which the argument is founded? And it is quite satisfactory to reason from the few to the many, thus;—

Certain capacities are a strong presumption of immortality;

*Some men* have manifested these capacities;

Therefore *all men* may be presumed immortal.

*b.* And certainly if stress be laid on the intellectual capacity which some have exhibited, the same amount of stress may be fairly laid on the incapacity of others to prove the opposite. But waiving this, I ask—

*c.* Why the stress is laid upon intellectual rather than moral attainments? For even if we were strangers to revelation, yet believing in a God who is the universal patron of virtue, it would be greatly more reasonable to suppose continued existence connected by him with *moral* excellence, rather than with *intellectual* power. And by how much the moral is superior to the merely intellectual, by so much ought it to sustain a greater weight of argument: and so if the argument derived from the moral status opposed that drawn from the intellectual, it would destroy it by reason of its superior force. Thus then in the opposite scale to the intellectual capacities of some, let us place the moral attainments often of the same individuals, and of the mass of mankind, and assuredly the omen would be portentous, our opponents being judges. But since it is the intellectual capacities that are chiefly adduced, I inquire again,—

*d.* At what degree in the scale of intelligence we are to find immortality first annexed? For who doubts that there is every conceivable gradation of intelligence, from the faintest rudimental intimations thereof, up to beings equal perhaps even to our loftiest conceptions of God, (seeing that the conceptions of the creature at their highest are necessarily finite.) But then, unless the disputant affirm immortality to be the portion of *all* minds, he is assuredly bound, if on the ground of capacity alone he affirm it of some, and not of others, to show at what degree in the scale this mighty endowment is first discoverable,—an endowment too which separates by a whole



infinitude its possessor from the mind which is only one degree lower in intelligence. For looking at the human and lower races together, or as ranged in concentric circles, do we not, so far as mind is concerned, discover something like a dim region where they meet and almost intermingle, where there is a sort of softening down of the differences, where, of the genus mind, the species almost blend with each other? A remark which I venture to make from under the broad shield of protection which some of the most distinguished metaphysicians extend over me. For while consciousness, reason, and the sense of right and wrong, are among the highest attributes of man, these in a degree are allowed to be possessed by some at least of the brute creation. Dr. Brown, according to his biographer, Dr. Welsh, "believed that many of the lower animals have the sense of right and wrong; and that the metaphysical argument which proves the immortality of man, extends with equal force to the other orders of earthly existence." And it is not the closest observer who will be the most startled by Coleridge's remark, about "the dawning of a moral nature" which he observed in the dog, of which he says, "We not only value the faithful brute, we attribute *worth* to him. This, I admit, is a problem of which I have no solution to offer." The extracts given on a previous page from Cudworth would also seem to imply that he attributed some sort of consciousness to the lower tribes.

Unless then immortality be affirmed of all mind, I ask, since the present argument has to do with capacity alone (and that intellectual, which only will answer the disputant's purpose) at what degree in the scale of intelligence this infinite endowment is first discoverable by reason? or, since "We can imagine all possible degrees of intelligence, are we to conceive the Creator bound to ally each one of these gradations indissolubly to infinitude?"\* But at this point would probably be adduced,—

Fourthly,—THE TENDENCY OF MAN TO PERPETUAL PROGRESSION. But—

*a.* If the reference be to intellectual advance, waiving the remark just here that it would be more pertinent if *moral* progression could happily be predicated of the generality

\* Dr. Gray.



of the race, it may be suggested that we certainly see progression, advance, in some animals below man. The more sagacious tribes are capable of being taught; and that they learn from experience everybody knows; so that the *individual* at all events makes advance.

b. Or if the reference be to moral progression, to the rising of man higher and higher towards the perfection of virtue, I ask is it all men, is it even the majority, or is it at present any more than an infinitesimal proportion that exhibit this upward and divine tendency? An author already quoted well states the case,—

“To say the most, it appears to us that the argument so felicitously stated [by Addison in the *Spectator*] is applicable only to a fraction of the species, and that no such progress as is described can be attributed to ordinary minds. Of the vast majority the progression is certainly rather *the downward one* than the contrary; rather *from the man to the brute, than from the man to the Divinity*. Can there be any appearance of reason then in claiming immortality for spirits thus self-debased? Where there is no actual *commencement* of a given course, is there any rational ground for expecting its *consummation*, or will any consistency require the Creator to *force* perfection on his creatures? From the fact that mankind are endowed with capacities susceptible of endless expansion, it may perhaps be allowable to conclude that the *means of such expansion have been provided for them*; but no law of fitness will require that *these means should be universally effectual*. Although the *aptitude* may, to adopt Paley’s language, *infer* design; yet *design does not preclude frustration*. We are therefore brought back to the *conditional* immortality already mentioned. It is only the *magnæ animæ* whose destination this argument would prove it to be perpetually ‘to go on from strength to strength; to shine for ever with new accessions of glory and brightness to all eternity, to be still adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; to be for ever beautifying in the eyes of God himself, and drawing nearer to him by greater degrees of resemblance.’”\*

\* “Immortality: its real and alleged Evidences.” By J. Gray, Ph. D. An able and interesting pamphlet which came into the writer’s hands during the delivery of the lectures, the notes of which formed the first edition of the present work, and to which he was indebted for one or two suggestions which he has great pleasure in acknowledging.

The argument may be legitimately carried even farther. For by how much an upward progression is supposed to prove a never-ending career, open to such glorious minds, by so much ought a downward tendency to indicate for the incorrigibly debased a gravitation, as Mr. Isaac Taylor has expressed it, "toward that nihility out of which we sprang."

The Fifth is the very interesting one derived from—

THE ANALOGIES PRESENTED TO US IN NATURE.

This argument has often been clothed with all the fascinations of poetry, of which it is so easily and beautifully susceptible. The day which gradually waned to evening shade, and was then lost in the darkness of night, is not hopelessly and irrecoverably gone. A few brief hours of gloom, and lo! the harbingers of returning day;

'The dawn is up, the fleecy sky

'Reddens in orient majesty.'

And what though winter's icy hand destroy all the mellow beauty of the autumn, and lay bare the pride of the forest, and bind up the flowing stream; what though, like the angel of death, he breathe into the face of nature, and seal up in marble rigidity all that lately was instinct with beautiful life, and cover it with his winding sheet? Short is his triumph;—the voice of spring shall be heard speaking to the heart of nature, and his soft warm breath on her cold cheek shall recall her to new life, and she shall be adorned with new beauty, and her praises shall be chaunted in every grove. So too the chrysalis, that lay motionless and dry, and to all appearance dead, wakes up to a higher life, and gloriously arrayed rises into the air, nestles in the bosom of the rose, and sips the nectar of the choicest flowers. Thus nature with a pencil of light traces the future destiny of man, thrown a golden ray upon his descending path, and leaves him not even in the tomb, without her 'perfumed lamp.'

But this can scarcely need a formal reply; though it may not be amiss to suggest to any whose judgments are led captive by the imagination, that,—

a. To constitute anything like a tolerable intimation even that man when he dies shall still live, (to say nothing about his living FOR EVER) we ought to have a great preponderance of instances in nature, in which from death there is a return to life. The chrysalis so often referred to, which after a

season of torpidity awakes to a higher life, is a rare instance: we know not many such; while the overwhelming preponderance of facts is on the other side; and that too in reference to the higher classes of animals, which when they die never present themselves again upon our path.

b. And then,—these interesting instances of a return from a death-like state, do not fairly apply. The analogy fails in a most important point; there is no yielding to dissolution or decay: the chrysalis remains undecomposed, and may be made to yield signs of life even during its torpid state. How different the case with man. He dies, and you can by no process force from the pale corpse the faintest symptoms of life, and soon affection itself is brought to exclaim,—‘bury my dead out of sight.’ And then,—

c. After two or three changes, from the egg to the worm, the chrysalis, and the butterfly, there is a complete and final end. So with the plant; after a few revolutions of winter and summer, it yields entirely to decay.

How then can we find anything like even an intimation of eternally renewed existence for man in these phenomena? Pleasing and interesting illustrations of a fact otherwise ascertained they may be; but no one needs to be reminded that a poetic illustration is one thing, an argument—a proof—another. Let it be granted most cheerfully, and even gratefully, that the God of universal nature has written lessons of instruction for man on all his works; let these instances of life after seeming death be thankfully accepted as suggesting, in the absence of revelation, a hope to man that possibly he may not be left in the dark chambers of the grave, but may come forth to new enjoyment. Yet this—how far from anything like a proof of immortality.

But the strongest argument is the last, namely,—Sixth,—

#### THE PERPLEXING ANOMALIES OF THE PRESENT STATE.

In the present state how often does vice triumph, while virtue weeps in secret places. Has it not indeed appeared the rule for ‘the wicked to flourish like a green bay tree,’ and for the vilest of men to be exalted? How many, like Asaph, have marked ‘the prosperity of the wicked, that they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish.’ It has struck the attentive observer in all ages: ancient heathens were sorely

puzzled by the strangeness of this moral phenomenon, while the reader of the scriptures can lay his hand on many passages illustrative of the difficulty referred to. Now, as the solution, it was suggested that, God being what he is, so wise and good and just, the necessary patron of virtue and enemy of all vice, there will be another state of existence after the present, in which all these anomalies shall be corrected,—a state in which piety shall be rewarded and wickedness punished.

a. I have called this the strongest and most satisfactory argument that reason can adduce; and is it not so? But who does not perceive where the fallacy lies? The argument has merely to be stated in form, and then no one can be at a loss as to its real value. It stands thus:—

The character of God ensures that he will reward  
virtue and punish vice,  
But in the present state this is not fully done,  
There remains therefore another state in which all  
shall be adjusted.

Let this stand as good reasoning; and no one, it is believed, can wish to enlarge the conclusion, for the premises will not sustain a larger. How then does it prove that the next state must be unending, and that man is immortal? Surely something less than *eternity* would suffice to rectify all the anomalies of the threescore years and ten of the present state. For will any one maintain the proposition,—that nothing less than time infinitely protracted would be sufficient for this purpose? Only let an attempt be made to realise what is meant by the word so easily pronounced, *ETERNITY!* and let it be remembered that when we have exhausted all our powers of calculation, taxing the imagination to multiply all the atoms in the universe by themselves, each standing for millions of ages, and heaping up all the illustrations we can invent, till the mind sinks back exhausted and distracted, even then we have done nothing, literally nothing, towards gaining any idea of eternity; of which it is not possible for the human mind to form an idea, for how can the finite take in the infinite? No,—a *Future State* may be shown to be not improbable, probable even in a high degree, but this is quite another thing from a proved immortality. And a future state protracted through



ages that out-number all the atoms of all worlds is after all infinitely short of immortality.

b. But while this is the strongest and most satisfactory argument that reason can adduce, yet as it does not prove a never-ending existence, so neither would it be able to satisfy some of the loftiest and purest minds of antiquity that there was even any future state at all. They would have boldly denied the minor premiss. For touching the two classes of mankind—the virtuous and the wicked—there were not wanting men of noble spirits, who held the elevated doctrine that virtue and vice are their own reward; that the virtuous, however outwardly depressed and persecuted, are nevertheless happy even here and now; that ‘the good man is satisfied from himself;’ and that the vicious, however seemingly prosperous, pay even during life the penalty of their vice. To such noble spirits, at all events, there would be no force in the present argument. For if virtue be its own reward, then there can be no debt to the virtuous to be paid hereafter; so that the hereafter, if believed in, must be based on some other and less presumptuous argument.

c. Besides it fails again on the slightest analysis. For of the virtuous and the vicious, who could affirm that the former deserve from God more of happiness than they have already had? Perfect obedience being due to God, there is no room for desert, which can have place only when more is done than is obliged to be done. But waiving this, if the notion of desert had been allowedly entertained at all, there would have to be set against the supposed claim all the benefits already received, which would greatly outweigh the claims of the best of the human race, especially when the desert of ill came also to be taken into the account. So that on any view, however self-interested, a man’s delinquencies and God’s previous favors would more than balance his claim founded on some degree of virtue; the virtuous therefore could not claim a future state of happiness.

And as to the other class;—though they might be adjudged by some of their fellows richly to deserve that they should be punished hereafter, yet who could have affirmed that God is *bound* to inflict on any being *all* the evil that justice would allow him to inflict? Surely they would not have denied to the Supreme Arbiter the power

or the right to remit punishment if he pleased; would not have affirmed that God was under obligation to make the wicked live after death, in order that they might suffer the full penalty deserved, especially if vice bring with it here positive uneasiness, beside the loss of that present happiness which virtue ensures even now. Reason in its utmost daring would not have asserted that God was under obligation to pour out *all* the wrath that the unhappy wretch had merited. Or, if it had ventured on such boldness, it never would have proved so false to itself as to assert that nothing less than infinite torment was due to a finite agent, whose conduct, however vile, nevertheless derived its quality of finite from the agent. The infinite for the finite is assuredly no deduction from reason.

So then we come to the conclusion, First, That this argument when properly stated can at the best do no more than support the doctrine of a future state, without bearing at all on the doctrine of immortality; and Secondly, That so far from even this corollary being allowed to pass as indisputable, one premiss which is essential to its existence would have been nobly denied by some of the very best men that antiquity could produce.\*

But we may draw this chapter to a close. Reason cannot prove man to be immortal. We may devoutly enter the temple of nature, we may reverently tread her emerald floor, and gaze on her blue 'star-pictured ceiling,' but to our anxious inquiry, though proposed with heart-breaking

\* "Such are the arguments (and we believe that we have presented all) by which a mighty spirit struggled to overcome the barriers of heathenism and natural religion. We *now* see that these efforts were in vain. Should *we* have been more successful under similar advantages? If appeal be made to the incomposite, and therefore indiscerptible nature of the soul, we may quash the appeal by reference to the incontrovertible truth that *no created being can know itself*, and that therefore consciousness cannot tell us whether we, i. e. our own souls, be incomposite or not. If it be further alleged that the justice of the moral government of God requires an after life, we reply that no Christian will affirm that any man deserves future *happiness*; the only question is, whether it is inconceivable that the wicked shall not hereafter be punished. But how can we tell, *à priori*, whether God is bound, or may see fit, *never* to relax *anything* of the punishment which a creature has incurred? How the question may be answered with our *present* knowledge of God's character and government, appears to us doubtful. So far as we know, this argument, drawn from the moral government of God, never occurred to a heathen, obvious

intensity, the oracle is dumb, or like those of Delphi and Dodona, mutters only an ambiguous reply that leaves us in utter bewilderment. So much the more valuable is a written revelation. And it is pleasant to the writer to reflect that hitherto he travels in company with the most intelligent of his brethren; it being generally agreed that the arguments from reason are altogether unsatisfactory.

Nor would he have deemed it necessary to devote even these few pages to the examination of the argument furnished by unassisted reason in favor of immortality, had he not found many persons still cleaving fondly to the opinion that the soul's immortality is thus demonstrable. And such individuals seem almost to consider it religiously important to maintain this, as though, to their apprehension, a truth revealed in scripture were somewhat less certain because a matter of pure revelation and not otherwise discoverable; forgetting that the scriptures are an exhibition of divine truth over and above all that is contained in the works of God, an addition made by God himself to the sum total of all the discoveries of natural religion, and given chiefly to communicate what the uttermost stretch of reason could never otherwise attain to. As to things unseen,—‘we walk by *faith*.’

And besides this class, the writer has been compelled to observe, even in some who grant that immortality cannot be proved by reason, a proneness to urge the metaphysical argument when they find it a less easy thing than they had anticipated to make out from scripture alone—a never ending existence for all mankind. But every one will consent to the fairness of the demand, that an opponent, having chosen his ground, shall either honorably maintain, or as honorably and openly surrender it. Either reason

as we may think it; and we are sure that some of their noblest philosophers would have put it aside by simply saying, that sin is its own punishment, and virtue its own reward.

On the whole, we are disposed to believe that the only certainty of a future state is derived from faith in the word of God. While others vaunt themselves on the sufficiency of their natural reason, we are content to cry with thankfulness and joy, ‘Lord! to whom shall we go? *Thou* hast the words of eternal life.’ ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*’” *Eclectic Review*, for Feb. 1838, Art. ii. *Œuvres de Platon*, &c.

can prove the doctrine, or it cannot. If any man choose to assert that it can, good; he has a right to his opinion, and to the maintenance of it. Let him then chivalrously take his stand here; the disowned however of logic, and to whom the metaphysics of the nineteenth century will assuredly extend no aid; while the shades of ancient philosophers, not a whit more shadowy however than the ground he essays to occupy, leaving their twilight abodes, may throng around in admiring curiosity to behold the man whose intellectual stature is to dwarf their loftiest powers.

But if it be conceded, as it ought to be, that reason cannot prove man will exist through all eternity, and that for our knowledge of this we are indebted to the scriptures alone, let an opponent (or rather let me say a brother inquirer after truth) confine himself to this more solid ground, without edging away again into that region of mist and darkness which he had previously renounced, and which by the general acknowledgment furnishes no standing place on which the fugitive from revelation can plant his foot. And we may appropriately conclude this chapter with a quotation from an eminent expositor, who firmly maintains the doctrine of eternal misery, and whose testimony therefore, wherewith most intelligent christians will agree, is the less likely to be received with hesitation.

PROFESSOR STUART says,—

“The *light of nature* can never scatter the darkness in question. This light has never yet sufficed to make even the question clear, to any portion of our benighted race, Whether the soul of man is immortal? *Cicero*, incomparably the most able defender of the soul’s immortality of which the heathen world can yet boast, very ingenuously confesses, that after all the arguments which he had adduced in order to confirm the doctrine in question, it so fell out, that his mind was satisfied of it only when directly employed in contemplating the arguments adduced in its favor. At all other times, he fell unconsciously into a state of doubt and darkness.

“It is notorious also that *Socrates*, the next most able advocate among the heathen for the same doctrine, has adduced arguments to establish the never-ceasing existence of the soul, which will not bear the test of examination. Such is the argument by which he endeavors to prove, that we shall always continue to exist because we always



have existed ; and this last proposition he labors to establish, on the ground that all our present acquisitions of knowledge are only so many *reminiscences* of what we formerly knew, in a state of existence *antecedent* to our present one. Unhappy lot of philosophy to be doomed to prop itself up with supports so weak and fragile as this ! How can the soul be filled with consolation in prospect of death, without some better and more cheering light than can spring from such a source ? How can it quench its thirst for immortality, by drinking in such impure and turbid streams as these ? Poor wandering heathen ! How true it is—and what a glorious, blessed truth it is—that ‘life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel.’ It is equally true, that they are brought to light *only* there.

“Nor has all the light which has been cast upon the subject of the soul’s immortality since the gospel was first published, enabled men, independently of the gospel itself to demonstrate this truth ; certainly not to show, with any good degree of satisfaction, what the future state of the soul will be.

“If there be any satisfactory light, then, on the momentous question of a future state, it must be sought from the word of God. After all the toil and pains of casuists and philosophers, it remains true, that the gospel, and the gospel only, has ‘brought life and immortality to light’ in a satisfactory manner.” *Exegetical Essays on several Words relating to Future Punishment.*

## CHAPTER THE THIRD.

---

Testimony of scripture on immortality—Mosaic narrative—Man made in image of God—Became a living soul—Force of these expressions, what—Assertion of a reviewer—Apostolic use of same phrase—Negative result—Garden of Eden—Threatening of death—Import of as explained by divines—As understood by Adam—His condition—His knowledge—Tree of life—Second Adam—Affirmative result.

For all knowledge on the subject of immortality we are indebted to that blessed volume which is given as a light to our feet and a lamp to our path. We have now, therefore, to inquire the nature of its testimony; and our second question, as already stated, is—

DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH THAT IMMORTALITY IS THE PORTION OF EVERY MAN?—THAT MAN, AS HE IS, AND INDEPENDENTLY OF CHARACTER, IS IMMORTAL?

In other words,—

DO THEY TEACH AN ABSOLUTE AND UNIVERSAL OR A CONTINGENT AND CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY?

In coming to the examination of this question, let two things be remembered, namely, First, the distinction, already suggested, between a future state and a proper immortality (for that there is a future state for all accountable creatures is not disputed); and Secondly, that we must, of course, leave out of consideration for a time, those texts which speak of the future condition of the wicked as everlasting, because the present inquiry is with the view of correctly understanding those very passages. To

adduce them in evidence at this point would be to reason in a circle. Necessarily omitting them, we naturally refer—First,

§ TO THE ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION OF MAN.

It is often said that when he was created he was made immortal; and it is alleged that the opening page of revelation contains proof of this. Which affirmation is based on two things; namely, The declaration that man was made in the image of God; and, The different expression that is observable when man is spoken of, from that employed when the animals are mentioned. Let us examine these positions; and—

§ 1. The declaration that God made man in his own image.

But what do we understand by this assertion? Of course, it has some all-important limitations. God is a pure Spirit;—it is not so that man was made in the divine image. God is independent and self-existent; man does not resemble him in this. He is omnipotent and omniscient;—is man, in this respect, made in the image of God? The Divine Being is infallible and irresponsible;—is it thus that man resembles him? We might instance other particulars, but these may suffice. And if man be not like God in any of these glorious attributes, what reason is there for selecting immortality, and asserting that it is in this respect that man bears the divine image? Especially since the immortality of God and of the creature is infinitely unlike, seeing that the immortality of the Divine Being is essential, and looks backward to the eternity that is past, as well as to that which is future; in which sense the apostle says, ‘He alone hath immortality.’

To say that ‘the image of God’ as used here denotes immortality, is to represent the self-communing God as saying, if it may be allowed us to paraphrase the expression, “We have hitherto made only creatures that will sooner or later die, let us now make an immortal creature.” And I venture to think that this is not the obvious idea, and that it has more of verisimilitude to suppose that the self-address rather exhibits the Creator as saying, “Hitherto we have made but irrational and unaccountable creatures, fit only to serve the purposes of a superior; let us now make an intelligent being, possessed of self-conscious-

ness and a moral nature, capable of rational happiness, and who shall rule over the inferior tribes as their lord." I say this appears to me a more probable idea than the former one. For since we must find in the expression, 'the image of God,' some characteristic in which man differs from the brute creation; so also must we seek for some *obvious* endowment which may in some measure render him like his Maker. It must be some very manifest quality, visible at a glance, that shall constitute man, as distinct from the other creatures, the image of God. And when we have found one or two *palpable* points of difference between him and them, such as those alluded to, and by which he really does bear some resemblance to his Creator, why should we arbitrarily fix on another endowment which, whether he has it or not, cannot become self-evident (like those other qualities which it is acknowledged on all hands he does possess) and the knowledge of which unapparent quality would have to be made known to him by revelation, without which, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, he never would discover that he possessed it? The very phrase '*image of God*' would seem to denote some easily recognisable resemblance.

Nor is this all. For if the assertion that man was made in the image of God proves his immortality, then, the evangelical statements in the new testament about 'a new creation' of man, the christian being 'a new man,' 'created anew in the image of God,' Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24, must imply that the image had been destroyed—the immortality forfeited by sin—and restored only by believing in Christ. Not that I should choose to adduce this as independently proving anything; but only insist that if the phrase 'made in the image of God,' as employed by Moses, proves immortality—the phrase, as employed by Paul, must mean the same; and so, since the latter affirms this is restored, it would follow that it had been lost; and thus, being now bestowed only upon those who are recovered to God, is not universal, and therefore was not absolute but contingent. So that this argument will not answer the purpose for which it is adduced.

However, it will most probably be deemed that these passages from the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians require to be understood of a mighty moral change, rather than as teaching any physical change in the condition of



man; signifying that he is made holy, rather than that he is made immortal. And truly this would seem the correct exposition. For in the one, the christian is exhorted to 'be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' and in the other, is declared to 'have put off the old man with his deeds, and to have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;'—where man is spoken of as again made in the image of God, and where the expression appears employed to denote moral resemblance.

Thus then the assertion that man was made in the image of God will not prove him immortal; or else the apostolic use of the phrase will show that since the fall this endowment is a gospel privilege.

§ 2. As to the difference of expression observable when man and the animals are respectively mentioned. The historian has given two accounts:—

GENESIS, chap. i.

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them:

28 And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

GENESIS, chap. ii.

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

It is the latter statement which bears the weight of the present argument. And two things are relied on, namely, That God breathed into his nostrils *the breath of life*; and,

That *man became a living soul.* These two facts are alleged as peculiarities, marking man off from all the animals, separating him from them by a whole infinity; he, it is said, has emphatically *the breath of life*, and he alone is made *a living soul*.

Now, suppose we find both these expressions used in reference to "all living things" without exception;—used so by the same writer—in the same book—and within a page or two of their first application to man;—must we not, in such a case, cease to attach any distinctive importance to them, and admit that—either the phrase does not prove immortality, or else equally proves all things that have life to be immortal too? Let us see then how Moses has used these two phrases.

i. As to the term 'the breath of life,' if we turn to Genesis, chap. vii., we shall find it employed in reference to all the other creatures, the beasts, birds, &c.:—

13 In the self-same day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark.

14 They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of *all flesh*, wherein is *the breath of life*.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of *all flesh*, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.

\* \* \* \* \*

21 And *all flesh died* that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

22 *All in whose nostrils was the breath of life*, of all that was in the dry land, died.

23 And *every living substance* was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground; *both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed* from the earth; and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

Every reader sees at a glance that both man and the brute creation are alike comprehended under the one phrase—'all flesh,' and—'every living substance;' and that of all alike and indiscriminately it is said—'in whose nostrils was the breath of life,' and of all alike 'wherein was the breath of life, that they 'died,' that they were 'destroyed.'

So then the term 'breath of life,' being applied to man in common with beasts and insects, cannot, in any degree, assist to prove him, as distinct from them, endowed with immortality.

ii. And as to the second expression, 'man became a living soul;' this is no more restricted to man than is the former. In Gen. i. 20, we read, 'God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life.' Where, by universal consent, a closer translation would be as the margin testifies, 'a living soul;' so that it would read, 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath a living soul.' Thus, precisely the same words are employed in reference to man, as to the other creatures. So much for the argument based on a supposed difference in the modes of speaking of man and the animals.

But it has been said in reply, that the stress is to be laid, not on the phrase, 'breath of life,' nor, 'living soul,' but on the word 'became.' "The force of the text, as an argument is in the words 'man became a living soul.' . . . A *thing* was created into that which it was not before, and which none of God's other earthly creatures are ever said to have *become*—a person. It is this which constitutes the difference of expression when man is spoken of and when the animals are."\*

I confess I do not see any great force in the remark, nor has the objector pointed out wherein the power to demonstrate an endless existence lies; so that I can but offer one or two observations on the supposed meaning, without being quite sure of really meeting the point which the writer had in his mind.

a. I may, however, decline the reviewer's substitution of the word *person* here for *soul*, which latter word is very properly used in our common version; although, of course, no one will deny that there are many passages where the word here rendered 'soul' is properly rendered 'person.' But the very gist of the present question is, Whether a phrase, which,—by the same writer, on the same page, and in the same connection—is used indiscriminately of man and the other animals, can prove him as distinguished from them to be immortal, when all the difference that is observable lies in the fact that the word '*became*' is applied

\* Congressional Magazine, January, 1845.

to him. For, by reference to the original, it will be seen that the predicate, '*living soul*,'\* so that in argumentative fairness the whole stress of the objection must be placed on the word *became*. And then the assertion to be examined is really this,—While of the creatures generally it is said that *they had* living souls, and they are called living creatures (the same word being used) it is said of man alone that *he became* a living soul; or, as the word is rendered by our translators, in the same connection, '*a living creature*.' So that, in truth, this word *became* is to bear the infinite weight of an absolute and universal immortality!

b. The account given of the creation of man is, as might be expected, somewhat more detailed than that of the creation of the animals. Although, if we except the divine self-communing which Moses beautifully represents as preceding the creative act, and the phrase already noticed asserting man to be made in the image of God, the first of the two statements respecting the creation of man is not very different from that which relates to the other creatures. For after saying that God created the heavens and the earth, that he made two great lights, and made the beast of the earth, and created great whales, &c., it is said, in precisely the same terms, '*so God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them*.' From which statement, had there not been a subsequent and more detailed one, we should have inferred that both male and female of human kind were created just as all the animals before had been, as to the *modus creandi*.

But man being the most important of God's works on earth, and several reasons being to be answered by a somewhat fuller description, which would be both interesting and profitable, the historian, after having given a brief statement of the six days' work, returns to this one point and gives a rather more particular account; thus,—

Gen. ii. 7. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground;—and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;—and man became a living soul.

From which we learn that God first of all made a man of earth; and then communicated to this, as yet inani-

\* See in the original, Gen. i. 20, 21, 24, 30. ii. 7, 19. ix. 12, 16.



mate organism, life. So that that (namely, the dust of the earth) which, on the first divine effort, 'became, what it was not before,' an organised body, by the next act became (again, what it was not previously) alive,—or possessed of a living soul, or became a living soul. By which phrase the historian would not appear to express more than the result of God's breathing into him the breath of life, which breath of life having been breathed into the animals also, they first and he afterwards became alive. For there is no very obvious reason why, if Moses had given as detailed an account of the creation of the animals, he might not have expressed himself in the same way; seeing that 'out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air,' as well as man. Now, since there is no life in dust, none in an animal form made of dust, and yet the creatures that were made thereof had 'the breath of life' (vii. 15—22) and 'living souls,' God must have communicated or breathed into them, when formed, the breath of life, and so they became, and only so, what they also were not previously, alive, or possessed of living souls, or became living souls or creatures; (for it is precisely the same word that is sometimes rendered 'souls,' sometimes 'creatures.')

Or if any one should object to this last phrase being applied to the creatures generally, it would be, I presume, because of some force which he conceives to lie in the word 'became;' since it is asserted that they had 'living souls,' and had 'the breath of life.' But to *have* life is to *be* alive. And I would have him ask himself what difference he can find in the inspired historian's mode of expressing himself that shall bear this infinite weight, sought to be put on the word—'became.' God certainly gave, or put into, or breathed into the animals 'the breath of life' (evinced by the fact that they had it) and they became alive. When, then, God breathes into the man, as yet inanimate, 'the breath of life' (precisely the same phrase) what is there in this communication of life, or 'the breath of life,' to him which at once endows the hitherto inanimate clay organism with *immortality*, when the same 'breath of life' communicated to all other creatures leaves them mortal? There is an infinite difference between the two, on the objector's view; yet where is it taught in the history? I ask. In the word 'became,' says the objector;

that one word will support the whole weight of the doctrine of man's immortality. This word, then, ought of itself to shut us up to the idea of endless permanency: whatever '*becomes*' anything that it was not before, must for ever be what it has '*become*.' For unless he will affirm this, he does not gain his point by laying all the emphasis on the word '*became*;' and if he will assert this, there are plenty of passages, to which, if he apply the reasoning, they will confute the notion.

The writer, however, knows at least one individual who would be sorely reluctant to think his own bright hope of immortality had to rest on any such basis as this; and I can scarcely conceive that, except within the compass of theology, anything of importance would ever be based on such a foundation—a pyramid built on a needle's point.

c. But fortunately we have this very text, on which so much stress is laid, quoted in the new testament. The apostle writing to the Corinthians expressly says 1. Epis. xv. 45 'and so it is written, The first man Adam *was made* [ἐγένετο] *a living soul*.' Here, then, is the same Spirit that dictated the phrase originally to Moses, now prompting Paul to quote the self-same expression, giving it in another language. What it means as used by the apostle in greek, that, under the circumstances, it means as used by the historian in hebrew. But the scope of the argument will show the apostolic idea of the Mosaic expression.

Reasoning with the deniers of a resurrection of the dead, after he had pointed out some consequences which would legitimately follow if there were no resurrection [namely, that then there would be nothing to hope for beyond this present life, so that in that sad case it would be but reasonable to make the most of the passing hour,—'let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.\*'] he proceeds to notice a supposed difficulty which one of the objectors might urge, 'How are the dead raised up and *with what body* do they come?' Towards the close of his answer to which, he intimates that it ought not to be so very difficult to believe in a resurrection body different from the present, seeing that there are already great varieties of bodies in creation,

\* See this illustrated in a subsequent chapter on The argument from the Resurrection.

v. 39—41. Why, then, may there not be a spiritual body? which he accordingly affirms there is, saying, verse 44, ‘There is a natural body [σῶμα ψυχικόν—a soul body] and there is a spiritual body’ [σῶμα πνευματικόν—a spirit body.] In support of which assertion he quotes our present text, Gen. ii. 7. saying, ‘And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul’ [ἐγένετο εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν.] Mark, this assertion of Moses is quoted by the apostle to show—what? that man was created immortal? nothing like it, but—that there is a natural, an animal body, a soul-body; which is what, therefore, according to Paul, Adam ‘became.’ Moreover, the first man Adam was *so* made a living soul, or, if it will please better, had so ‘become’ a living soul, as to leave room for such a second Adam as should be even to him a quickening, LIFE-GIVING, spirit [πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν.]

So that if, in these days of multiplied infallibilities, it may be allowed us to prefer an apostolic and inspired exposition of the original record, we shall respectively take leave still to affirm that there is no expression on the opening page of a progressive revelation which teaches the unutterably grand prerogative of an uncontingent immortality for all mankind.

---

Hitherto our argument has been chiefly negative. Let us advance a step. It is submitted then—not only that, from the fact of precisely the same terms being employed in reference to man and the other creatures, immortality as distinguishing him from them, cannot be proved from the original account of the creation, but,—that there are circumstances in the history of our first father which look in quite the opposite direction.

Let us then ascend the stream of time, till, near its source, we find ourselves in the garden home of the first inhabitants of the virgin earth. Worn as our spirits often are, is it not refreshing to wander in thought among those bowers of paradise, and breathe the ‘vernal airs,’ and recline beneath the spreading branches, while ‘the heaven’s deep blue, the earth’s unsullied green,’ the sunbeam glancing on the golden fruitage, the rustling of the woods, the

murmur of the streams, and every note of every insect, and all the sights and sounds of rejoicing nature, steep the senses in elysian reverie. But it is not thus, it is not thus, that we are now to visit the birth-place of our kind. We have a solemn question to ask the sire of men, and we gaze on him with awful eye. For while we could lose ourselves in soft delight, as we contemplate

‘————— the loveliest pair  
‘That ever since in love’s embraces met,’

yet one anxious question weighs upon our spirits, and we enter our father’s leafy home only to have it solved. For we have heard, like the muttering sound of distant thunder, that to them thus full of life, to whom existence was a mighty boon, God threatened in case of disobedience—‘Thou shalt surely die!’ and we ask, What meaneth this? All important is the inquiry,

#### § WHAT WAS THE DEATH THUS THREATENED?

I shall confine myself for obvious reasons, to two opinions, namely, that which may be designated the orthodox one, and that which appears to me the more consistent.

The popular orthodox opinion concerning the death threatened to the sinner is, that it includes several things;—namely, First, The entire and perpetual alienation of the heart from God, the love of sin and hatred of holiness, an overpowering bias to all evil, the thorough corruption of the moral nature,—commonly called ‘spiritual death;’ Secondly, All the evils and miseries of this present life, but without any mitigation (for relief belongs to a remedial system); Thirdly, The separation of soul and body, when the latter returns to corruption,—or ‘death temporal;’ Fourthly, The separate existence of the soul in an intermediate state of misery and shivering anticipation of worse; Fifthly, A resurrection of the body and reunion therewith of the soul, in order that the entire man may be capable of intenser anguish, which, without one moment’s interval, shall be his dreadful portion for ever and for ever,—commonly called ‘death eternal.’ These ideas, often expressed, as indeed they ought to be if true, in very much more appalling language than I have used, are perpetually exhibited as constituting the death which is ‘the wages of sin,’



and which, to speak after the manner of divines, is thus made to consist of "*death spiritual,—death temporal,—and death eternal*;" current phraseology which falls glibly from the lips of thousands.

On this notion I submit a few remarks. But I shall not comment on the apparent strangeness of the idea that God condemns those who have sinned once, to sin on and on for ever; although it does seem somewhat mysterious to represent him that is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' as speaking to his creatures after such a fashion as this,—“So unutterable is my abhorrence of sin, which is the only thing in all the universe that I hate, that if you sin, I will doom you to sin for ever. In token of my hatred thereof you shall sin to all eternity. Beware, therefore; for if you disobey me in this one thing, you shall instantly be rendered averse from all good, and greedy of all evil. So utterly beyond all finite comprehension do I loathe the least degree of wickedness, that if this be ever found in you, then wickedness shall constitute your very nature, and rise to a giant growth in you, and you shall hate me, with increasing intensity, through the cycles of eternity.”—I say, although this (which I have put into other phraseology, because the accustomed and hacknied terms are often, and for that reason, “the tombs rather than the symbols of ideas”) constitutes a part of what is meant by the phrase “*death spiritual*,” I offer no comment thereon, but in submitting a few remarks shall confine myself to the bearing on our present subject.

We have seen then what is the orthodox opinion on the death threatened to the sinner—that it includes *death temporal,—death spiritual,—death eternal*.

But if this be, as divines tell us, what is now meant by the death threatened to the sinner (for death has from the beginning of the world down to the close of revelation been the penalty threatened to the sinner) it must have been the death originally threatened to Adam, which indeed is generally agreed; for who supposes the death threatened to the first sinner, to differ from the death threatened to the second, or any other? All through scripture death is exhibited as the just wages of sin, and assuredly it is fitting to take our first idea of its meaning where first we find it used.

But I think it must be obvious on examination that Adam could not have understood it so. The terms of the

sentence would not of themselves convey this notion. It is not their plain and obvious meaning. Common sense would never put this interpretation on them.\* To make them stretch thus thoroughly *ad infinitum* requires a mighty theological Procrustes, such as we may be quite sure never entered Eden. And I submit that Adam could never have understood the sentence to include what the popular belief finds in it, *unless the words had been so explained to him*; of which as there is no account so it may not be taken for granted, in order to make out a theory.

It is true indeed that some persons seem to imagine Adam of quite another order of beings than ourselves, endowed with I know not what of superhuman knowledge. Whether consciously or not, it is the imagination, though often verbally proscribed and denounced, rather than either reason or revelation, that has been generally courted to describe the personal and relative condition of our first parents, and even the severest theology has, perhaps almost unwittingly, allowed poetry to rule the hour.

But assuredly he had no faculties that we do not possess. And quite as surely he was not only in the first stage of his being, but at the very starting point of his course, which might stretch on and on through all eternity. Such a moral agent needs to be disciplined and trained. His faculties must all of them be exercised, without which, as there could not be growth, improvement, there would not long be happiness, except indeed of the very lowest kind. But even Eden, simple as were its arrangements, was adapted for our first parents, as they were constituted. Adam would have to acquire knowledge in the ordinary way, in order that thus his mental powers might be exercised.

\* Let no one object to this reference to "*common sense*," for, proscribed as this very suspicious endowment often is from the domains of theology, I should not have ventured on inviting so heterodox an ally, had not one of my reviewers happily given me leave to do so, by intimating that '*common sense*' was already engaged in the pending cause, but alas for me! retained on the other side, saying, "*Common sense* will do stern justice by Mr. Dobney's theory, and we for our own parts shall weep no tears of grief." [*Cong. Mag.*] So that '*common sense*' it seems is not only free to plead, but invoked to sit even on the judgment seat, to do "*stern justice*!" But if this be so, and if common sense be indeed throned as arbiter, I possibly may not need those "*tears*" of sympathy which it is so cruelly resolved beforehand to withhold.

Being placed at the very commencement of his course, intended to be progressive, he would require indeed to be supplied at once with the needful amount of knowledge; and as he was created with the full use of his bodily senses without passing through the stage of infancy, so doubtless he was created in the full possession of his intellectual powers, and probably knew, by something like intuition, just so much as would enable him to move forward from that starting point, under the usual laws of intellectual existence. But it is not God's wont to over-endow any creature, nor so to impart knowledge as to supersede the necessity for the creature's very best efforts. Just enough, and no more than enough, of endowment for human beings beginning their career, is what commends itself to our judgment as most desirable, and most in harmony with the principles on which the all-wise God seems to us to proceed. And if we think of the human race in its entirety, study the history of humanity as a whole, we find that, speaking generally, there has been progress.

We may suppose Adam to have been created perhaps in the beauty and vigor of early manhood, and to have awoke out of nothingness somewhat as we awake out of sleep, with just so much of knowledge as was needed for the circumstances in which he was placed, but not more; more he must acquire by the exercise of his powers, with such oral communications as his Creator might see fit to make.

To suppose more than this would be quite arbitrary on our parts. We have no right to assume for instance that Adam was by intuition an astronomer, beside whom the Herschells of the present day are children; or that he knew of the earth's roundness, or could read its earlier history as geologists do now, on the rough and flinty faces of the rocks; or recognised the value of mathematical lines and curves, or understood intuitively the various laws of nature. For while we have no warrant for it, everything concurs to discountenance the notion.

We may, generally speaking, take men's ideas of God as a pretty good criterion of their intellectual status; more especially if they have not been subjected to a long operation of debasing influences. And if we could ascertain the amount of our first parents' knowledge of God, we should have a standard by which to take their intellectual stature. We ask then did God, as often

afterwards in patriarchal times, assume a visible form in order to instruct the new-born intelligences? The circumstances of the case, joined with the fact of such appearances subsequently, would lead us to believe so, while some of the intimations in the Mosaic narrative would plainly teach the notion. Adam seems to have seen in vision during sleep the process of the creation of Eve; the narrated circumstances of which would necessitate the idea of a visible form. And he sought to hide himself from the presence of the Lord; which may again convince us of the fact. But if so, how incipient, how puerile almost, comparatively, must be the ideas formed of a God whose shape is seen by the eye. When for instance in later times Abraham conversed with the Lord in human form, with the angel Jehovah,\* who condescended to accept of the hospitality of his tent; or Jacob wrestled the livelong night with the mysterious stranger, of whom at the close he said I have seen God face to face;† how can we suppose those

\* Gen. xviii. 1—8. ‘And the Lord appeared to him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he went to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant; let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; and after that you shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to a young man: and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree: and they did eat.’

† Genesis xxxii. 24—30. ‘And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said let me go for the day breaketh; and he said I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? and he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me I pray thee, thy name; and he said, Wherefore is it, that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved!’



patriarchs, honored as are their names for ever, to have those loftier conceptions of the Divine Being which, from a larger acquaintance with the magnificence of the universe, from the corrections which science has supplied, and above all from the more elevated writings of later prophets and apostles, and especially from the instructions of Christ himself, it is our privilege to acquire?

In teaching children about God, we of course begin with such ideas as their little minds can receive; and if they grow up pious and thoughtful, and are favorably situated, they rise in their conceptions of God higher and higher as long as they live. It is so with ourselves. In childhood we conceived a bright and glorious form sitting august on a lofty throne, surrounded with obedient and swift-winged servants; and we have been ever since gradually correcting our early ideas, and acquiring loftier and still loftier views of the Infinite Spirit, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the author and sustainer of all existence. But what pious and intelligent english youth of the nineteenth century has not higher views of God than patriarchs would necessarily form, having seen the object of their worship in the human shape, and stood by while he partook of the hastily dressed meal?

Thus then was it with the earliest individuals of our race, in the earliest period of their existence. And that we are correct is pretty clearly evidenced by the fact of their almost amazing simplicity, in thinking they could conceal themselves from his view, if they cowered behind a tree! 'And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.' The child of intelligent parents among us that has not past his tenth year, has acquired correcter ideas of God than this indicates. Why they could not have known that God is a spirit, to whom all things are ever present. Nor will it do to reply that the sin they had just committed immediately caused a wonderful obscuration of their intellect. For if the understanding became suddenly darkened, this would happen either naturally, as the inevitable consequence of sin, or by immediate interference. But we have no hint of God's having at once interposed to darken and distort on their minds, the image of himself, nor yet is it credible that he should so act. Neither is it the natural tendency of an act of disobedience, however heinous, to deprive a man instantly of the

knowledge he had possessed immediately before. A long course of hardened sin and degrading vice, indeed, will cloud our perceptions of 'the beauty of the Lord our God,' incapacitate us to enjoy communion with him, and prompt to unworthy ideas. But no one day's sinfulness, nor indeed a whole life of sin, would sink an intelligent english christian, who should thus miserably fall from a state of holiness, from his elevated ideas of the Infinite Jehovah into such notions as pagans form,—would not transform a Howe or a Foster into a Hottentot! Has the Prince of the power of the air lost his *knowledge* of the Divine Being by the natural operation of his long-continued apostacy? Why if to blot out of the memory knowledge that was previously there, be the natural operation of transgression, then would *all* knowledge, especially of God, gradually ebb out of sinful minds.

The ideas then that Adam had of the Divine Being immediately after his sin, were in harmony with those he had previously formed; and thus we have the desired standard whereby to take his intellectual proportions, which, in connection with all the circumstances of the case, forbid our imagining him in the first days of his existence, while fresh with the dew of his youth, likely or indeed able to deduce from the simple phrase Thou shalt die, all that divines five or six thousand years afterward, in the plenitude of their theological might, are skillful enough to excogitate therefrom.

Let it be remembered that, as we have no reason to suppose him skilled in the physical sciences, while his ideas of God were manifestly and almost necessarily very puerile, we may be quite sure he was still less skilled in pneumatology, and was little enough of a metaphysician. If he believed himself destined to an endless existence, endowed with an immortality that could not be alineated, it must have been, either, because it was revealed to him (of which, all-important and decisive as it would be, as there is no intimation so we may not suppose it) or, because he had reasoned out the fact for himself; which for many reasons it is submitted he was incompetent to do.

When then I am gravely assured that the death threatened to Adam included, as divines say, "death spiritual, death temporal, and death eternal," in addition to all other objections, I reply that it surpasses my power to believe that he to whom it was threatened could so have understood

it, unless it were explained to him to mean so, which not being intimated, is not to be assumed.

There is nothing indeed on which it more behoves, or in fact so much behoves, that there should be perfect and transparent explicitness, as in a sentence denouncing evil in case of transgression. One who is in any danger of violating law, ought to be able by due pains-taking to understand the threatened consequences of voluntary ill-doing. It would not be righteous in a human lawgiver to threaten ten stripes and inflict a thousand, or to threaten a day's imprisonment and then commit to the galleys for life, or hand over to the grim executioner. This, amongst men, would be properly denounced as most flagrant tyranny. Let the man whom it is wished to deter from a criminal act know explicitly the full legal consequences of crime. Yet—not to lay any stress at this point on what nevertheless appears a forcible objection against the idea of endless torment as the proper punishment of sin, namely, that it cannot be made level to the apprehension of the creature whom it is intended to warn thereby—it does not appear to me that Adam could possibly have understood the threatening as intending what the orthodox make it to mean,—misery here, separation by a painful process of body and soul, intermediate state of terrible suspense and awful suffering, resurrection of the body and reunion of the spirit in order to increased torment, which should last for ever!

I repeat, I cannot see how the simple assertion—Dying thou shalt die, can bear this infinite weight so fondly put upon it. When God speaks, he surely speaks to be understood, in order that those whom he addresses may know something. Is it any part of wisdom to pronounce words that no one can comprehend the real meaning of, or which seem to mean one thing, but in reality mean quite another, and that the very opposite, and even infinitely more dreadful? How was Adam to understand that *death* meant *life*,—*endless* life—endless life *in torment*?

On the contrary, the very words would seem to shut us up to the idea that utter destruction, cessation of existence, return to that nothingness out of which the divine power had called him, was the death threatened to our first father in case of transgression. An interpretation which is not only the most natural in itself, considering all the circumstances, but to which we are additionally impelled by the

exposition of the sentence which the author thereof himself gave, when after the transgression he appeared to judge the guilt-stricken pair. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' How utterly unlike the strain in which divines expound the original sentence! Not a word here about an intermediate state of misery for the disembodied spirit, and a resurrection to everlasting wretchedness. The return to dust is what the judge awards. Why then cannot theologians acquiesce when the mouth of the Lord hath spoken?

Is it not evident that Adam had as yet, at all events, no notion of two natures constituting him one person—no notion that the 'thou' whom God addressed could not return to dust, but *must* survive the dissolution of the body? Or, are we to suppose that Adam stood there begirt in metaphysical panoply of proof, and saying within himself,—“It is only this naturally perishable body which is doomed after all; the Lord hath passed no sentence on my immortal spirit, which will survive the decay of this animal frame, and which being unsentenced shall therefore be unscathed.” For be it observed, the Judge sentences only to death, and a return to dust. And God himself, it is earnestly submitted, in his own best interpreter.

Seeing then that God said not a word about everlasting misery after death, and that there is nothing whatever to induce the supposition that Adam had reasoned out for himself the doctrine of his immortality, and so of the natural survivance of the spirit after the body's dissolution, it ought to follow that he would understand the threatened death to mean cessation of existence. While it would seem self-evident that if Adam did not, and from the circumstances could not, understand his sentence to include everlasting misery in hell, this could not be what his righteous judge intended.

§ And this interpretation is confirmed by the peculiar circumstances connected with the *Tree of Life*; concerning which a remark or two may not be irrelevant.

The Mosaic narrative must be either wholly allegorical, or wholly literal. I am constrained to take it literally, and to agree with those who consider the allegorical utterly inadmissible, as involving far more of difficulty and inexpli-



cableness. And herein I am happy again to find myself at one with my evangelical brethren generally, so that the reasons which compel to this view need not detain us, but we may proceed to our point.

I suppose the common belief is that, prior to his transgression, Adam was perfectly proof against every form of ill, and that every kind of pain and suffering is to be traced up to the Fall. But have people exercised their 'common sense' when they have rested in this belief, which nothing in the scriptures necessitates, or even warrants? We need not pause to prove, what no intelligent reader will deny, that what are called the laws of nature had been in operation long before man was placed on the earth. The twin sciences of geology and astronomy have settled that point for ever. Ages ere man was created, incalculable masses of vegetable matter had been buried deep in the bowels of the earth, to form those inexhaustible coal-beds without which our mines of iron, &c. would be useless, and man must have been in little better than a rude uncivilised condition. And as there had been decay in the vegetable world, so also in the animal kingdom; as is shown by the fossil remains of creatures which comparative anatomy demonstrates must have lived in an earlier stage of the world's history; not to mention those extensive formations which are the result of insect industry overwhelming to realise. The sin of man had nothing to do with rendering the animals mortal, or altering their natural dispositions, or their physical structure. The bible breathes no syllable to this effect, and the indisputable facts of science utterly disprove it. Poetry indeed adopts the idea, and beautifully presents it to our captivated imagination. But while we do all fitting honor to the true bard, and to 'immortal verse,' yet poetry is not to write our creed.

All the laws of nature, then, being in harmonious operation, was man exempt from their influence? I ask. Had he fallen from a tree, would he not have been bruised? Supposing there had been a fire kindled in Eden, was the man insensible to its heat? Would it not have warmed him? And would it not have inconvenienced him, had he approached too near? Had he laid his hand in it, would he not have been burnt? Or, had there been any sharp instrument there, say a sharp flint, would it not have cut him? And if so, would not the blood have flowed, or would

there have been no sense of pain? Or, would it have been perfectly safe for him to fall into one of the four rivers that bounded his leafy home? And yet this is the belief, not the less confident for being adopted without warrant from either scripture or reason, of thousands of christians, who seem to take for granted that Adam was charmed against the influence of all the laws of nature. And what Southey makes Kehama inflict on Ladurlad,\* as the direst *curse* which even a poet's wildest fancy could invent, christian people suppose to constitute a part of the *blessing* resting on primeval man; namely, an absolute exemption from the laws of nature. And grave divines, in their gravest moments, outdoing the old greek bard who made his hero vulnerable only in the heel, make the first man, all flesh and blood as he was too, invulnerable and impassible in every point!

Nor will it help out their amazing theory, for which they cannot show one jot or tittle of warrant from holy scripture, to plead that, as God possesses all power, he could miraculously endow Adam, as Homer endowed Achilles, with invulnerability, and give to flesh the properties of marble. We are not to invent miracles at our pleasure. The Creator does not perform his work so imperfectly as to be obliged to interpose at every moment with miracles; the value of which is chiefly evidential, and our sense of their value makes us the more sensitive to the mischief which is done by the ready habit of referring everything to miraculous agency. We are not treading the region of fable and ro-

\* "I charm thy life  
From the weapons of strife,  
From storm and from wood  
From fire and from flood,  
From the serpent's tooth,  
And the beasts of blood:  
From sickness I charm thee,  
And time shall not harm thee;

\* \* \* \* \*  
And water shall hear me,  
And know thee and fly thee;  
And the winds shall not touch thee  
When they pass by thee,  
And the dews shall not wet thee  
When they fall nigh thee."

\* \* \* \* \*

*Southey's curse of Kehama.*

mance, be it remembered. It is not the early origin of the Roman people that we are inquiring into, at the hands of wonder-loving historians, who string together the popular legends of their ancient bards; 'we have a more sure word of prophecy.' The divinely instructed writer of the first page of this world's history was of quite another race I ween. What he records we believe implicitly; but fables are not to be foisted into his narrative, to answer the purposes of a theological system.

Warm flesh and blood like any of ourselves, with just the same apparatus of veins and arteries and nerves, the body of our earliest ancestor was of course as capable of pleasure, and therefore, from the nature of the nervous system, of pain as our own. A sharp flint or a thorn would have wounded his foot as easily, or had he fallen with his head against a rock it would have ached as readily, as my reader's; for it was no fairy land that he inhabited, but a garden of this every day world's earth, with just such trees growing in it, and just such streams surrounding it, as we gaze on now. It was no other planet than this same that was the home of the infancy of our race. And since the tendency of all compound bodies is to dissolution, the bodily frame of Adam was as liable to decay as any of the organised substances about him. Here then we see the value of the tree of life, which (interpreting the whole narrative literally, with the rest of the orthodox,) we understand to be what its name imports, a tree adapted to sustain life. And since the Creator has been mercifully pleased to endow plants with various medicinal virtues, so that the vegetable kingdom is full of nutritive and remedial agencies, and to give to the very atmosphere we breathe something of vital power, it is only in harmony with palpably existing arrangements to believe that there was in Eden a plant more abundantly endowed, than any now known, with life-sustaining and remedial virtue; whose property it was to counteract the natural tendency to dissolution of the bodily frame of our first parents, and to repair the ill consequences that might arise from accidental injury.

And such a view of the Tree of Life appears to be authenticated by the allusions made to it in other parts of scripture. For though these should be shown to be metaphorical, yet the metaphorical presupposes the literal, which is its necessary basis. Thus in the new Jerusalem of the

apocalyptic vision, John saw 'in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: *and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations,*' (Rev. xxii. 2,) on which Professor Stuart, the most recent commentator on the Apocalypse, says—"Nor is it the fruit only which is of use to the inhabitants of the new world. Even the leaves of the trees are sanitary to the nations. In other words, The distant nations may derive healing and life-preserving virtue from the leaves of the trees, carried abroad, and distributed among them."

So then the reason alleged for the banishment of the man from the garden, namely, 'Lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,'—\* becomes quite intelligible, and was a necessary consequence of the sentence pronounced, 'Thou shalt die,'—'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' Deprived then of access to this remedial and life-sustaining plant, exposed to the various incidents which would naturally befall, subjected to the wear and tear of daily toil and sorrow, he would sooner or later, having naturally reached the highest point of maturity, descend the hill of life, and with weary step, finding even the grasshopper a burden, would come nearer and nearer to the evident termination of his course. No counteracting tree of life inviting him to eat thereof and renew his youth, the old man, bending beneath the weight of years, saw the grave before him, and yielded to the stroke of death. 'And all the days that Adam lived, were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.' What merciful revelations were made to him by his benevolent Creator, what hope, faint at first like the first streak of morning light, but growing brighter and brighter as he travelled onwards, sustained his dejected spirit, it falls not within the scope of this chapter to inquire.

\* "That man was originally created of an immortal nature, and that our first parents would have been exempt from death but for a change introduced into their nature at the Fall, is by some persons taken for granted very hastily. The scripture-account in Genesis rather implies the contrary; namely, that they were to be preserved from death by the continual use of a certain medicine (as it may be called) appointed for that purpose,—the fruit of 'the Tree of Life:' for we are told that man was driven out of Eden, 'lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.'" *Abp. Whately's Scripture Revelations of Future State.* p. 3.



We have visited that garden of the Lord which he was appointed to dress, only to ascertain—Whether the amazing fact of an uncontingent immortality for all mankind, is among the first lines of truth conveyed on the opening page of a progressive revelation, which, in one of its latest declarations, states that ‘Christ brought life and immortality to light;’—and, What was the nature of the sentence passed on man.

And finding precisely the same terms employed in common in speaking of Adam and the inferior creation, we conclude that unless those terms prove the beasts, birds, fishes and insects to be immortal, they cannot prove that he was. While yet further, we find ourselves imperatively compelled to believe that the sentence pronounced in case of transgression, considered in itself, and as it must have been understood by Adam, and as it was expounded by the Judge himself, and was illustrated in the banishment from the life-sustaining tree, and by the fact contained in the concluding record of the historian; (‘Thou shalt die, said God; ‘and he died,’ wrote Moses) conveyed the sole idea of cessation of existence—a return to that blank nothingness out of which he was brought,—and that, unless a remedial system had mercifully intervened, when Adam died there would have been an utter and everlasting extinction of his conscious being.\*

A conclusion to which we are still further impelled by a consideration of the benefits conferred on our mortal race by the ‘Second Adam, the Lord from heaven,’ who (thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift) is, unto all his followers, A LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT, the author of the resurrection, and the bestower of everlasting life. But these ideas must be worked out in subsequent and distinct chapters.

\* If the reader has not perused a pamphlet which appeared early in last year, intitled, “The Fall; what was it?” and published by Jackson & Walford, I take the present opportunity of commending it to his serious attention. He will find it to be the production of an acute, a cultivated, and a vigorous mind, whose endowments are sanctified by fervent piety, and happily consecrated to the highest objects.

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

---

THE ARGUMENT FROM RESURRECTION—Preliminary observations—Theories extant, Three—The First—The Second—The Third—Great importance of Resurrection in the estimation of new testament writers—Illustrations of this—Christ consoling Martha—Paul comforting Thessalonians, &c.—His discourse to the Corinthians, xv. chap.—Christ's confutation of the Sadducees—In how many states of embodiment does man exist, 2. Cor. iv. 1—8.—Other passages—Result—Connection with preceding Chapter, and subject generally.

We have already seen reason to believe that the death threatened to Adam was the death of the entire man, the cessation of all conscious existence, which would therefore have been his doom had it not been for the mediatorial work of the second Adam. But many other things concur to establish this belief. Among the chief of which, as already intimated, we shall find the inspired declarations concerning the blessings that accrue from the mediation of Christ. And of these, having heard man sentenced to death, we may with propriety come at once to consider that grand evangelical doctrine which has so close a connection with our subject, and so decided a bearing thereon, namely,

### § THE RESURRECTION.

The reader will not however expect me to attempt more on this interesting topic than our immediate purpose requires. We begin with a few preliminary observations.

i. All christians of every denomination believe in a resurrection of the dead. It is one of those great doctrines of christianity about which, *as a fact*, all are thoroughly

agreed ; and although there is a diversity of opinion as to some of the particulars, such as—Wherein precisely it consists, and, When it has place—yet as to the great fact itself, no question is ever raised by any parties that receive the scriptures as a revelation from God.

ii. The scriptures attach greatly more importance to the glorious fact of a resurrection from the dead, than the majority of evangelical christians of the present day are wont to do. A remark however which will probably have to be repeated in the course of the chapter, and may therefore be left for the present.

iii. All christians agree that the resurrection body differs most materially from our present grossly corporeal frame. The assertion of our Lord—that ‘they who are accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage,’—will suggest one point of difference. While the apostle’s declaration,—‘Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them,’—will suggest another. And a third inspired assertion will show that the difference is yet more extensive, for—‘This I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption.’ So then our resurrection body will not be one of bone and muscle, and heart and lungs, and veins and sinews, &c.; it will not be corruptible, as a body so composed naturally is. It will not therefore be that same corruptible body which was laid in the grave, or burnt at the stake, or devoured by beasts, or eaten by fishes.

For while all the multitudinous particles, which composed that gross body, had previously existed from the creation in every variety of combination, so have they subsequently entered into as many other strange combinations; helping to form, first,—soil; then taken up by—vegetable substances, and, as such, assisting to compose—various animal forms; which, being partaken of by human beings, have been assimilated, and so found again as the particles of—a human body. So that the particles of which our present bodies are composed, have been, through all preceding ages, the component parts of numerous other bodies, both vegetable and animal; and will be again, after our dissolution, and so to the very end of time. And the apostle emphatically declares, in that interesting analogy

which he institutes between the seed-corn cast into the ground and the lifeless corpse,—‘*Thou sowest not that body that shall be.*’

iv. The scriptures nowhere represent any of the human race as consciously existent in a *perfectly disembodied state*, as naked spirits. If any reader fancies that he knows passages which intimate such a state, he will probably find on re-examination, that they do not support the notion. The phrase ‘separate or intermediate state,’ whether good or not, is of quite our own coining. Moses died and was buried; yet he appeared on Tabor with Elijah, and he was visible—or embodied; and if reference be made to the parable of Dives and Lazarus, though parables were never constructed to teach psychology, yet there is no intimation of a disembodied state.

v. Nor do the scriptures ever speak of *three successive bodily* states for man. They only recognise the present body and the resurrection body; *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, the animal body, or soul-body; and *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, the spiritual, or spirit-body. If poets or divines pleasantly represent a third body, as intervening between the present and the resurrection body, it should be recognised that, however this may seem to them logically necessary in order to fill in the sketch made by an inspired pen,—yet here revelation ceased, and here man undertook to complete what the divine artist omitted. Whether the picture thus jointly finished is pleasanter to look upon, and, if so, whether it is also more truthful, I do not undertake to determine, but merely note the fact.

Seeing then that the doctrine of the resurrection is so capital an article of christianity, it is not surprising that it should have engaged the attention of thoughtful men, who, in the endeavor to harmonise the various statements of scripture on the subject, have almost as a matter of course, proposed different hypotheses. The extant theories on the subject of resurrection are three, and so far as I know, it would be difficult, or impossible, to suggest a fourth which should be quite distinct from the others.

THE FIRST THEORY is—That when man dies, the emancipated spirit passes into an intermediate state, which is one of consciousness, and therefore one of happiness or



misery, according to the character. In which separate state the spirit continues till the period, believed to be intimated in scripture, when this world shall come to an end,—that is, ‘the last day;’ when the spirit shall come from its abode in Hades, to the surface of the earth, whence shall be evolved the very body (though changed in many of its properties) which it had tenanted during its mundane existence; and that, in some unexplained manner, the conscious spirit shall recognise and glide into and again take possession of the newly-raised body, which somehow would seem to be raised in a state of life; and so the spirit being once more lodged in the body shall proceed forthwith to judgment.

This theory is the one most commonly received. But the holders of it are divided into two classes, differing among themselves on one important point. The majority represent the spirit as not altogether unclothed and naked during the intermediate state, but as provided with a temporary corporeal vesture or vehicle, by means of which it can take cognisance of, and commune with, an external world. And beautiful are the scenes of the celestial paradise, amid which the departed and semi-glorified saint awaits with his blessed companions the resurrection morning, when, again lodged in a more material body, he shall be raised to heaven, to be with Christ for ever, and his bliss (heretofore incipient only) shall be complete for ever.\*

Of course this theory,—which by some is so modified as to make heaven itself the abode of the saints immediately after death, and prior to the resurrection, which they nevertheless anticipate at some more distant period,—has very much to recommend it, or it never could have been so prevalent. Agreeably with scripture, it represents an im-

\* If any of my readers should chance to be unacquainted with Mr. Sheppard’s “Autumn Dream; Thoughts in verse on the intermediate state of Happy Spirits, &c.” they will be thankful in proportion to their taste and their sense of the beautiful, to be introduced to one of the most pleasing volumes which the present prolific age has produced; the amiable and accomplished writer being at the same time a scholar, a philosopher, a poet, and a christian of a pure and elevated mind. To his very interesting appendix I am indebted for one or two quotations in a previous chapter, which, though ascribed to their authors, were accidentally omitted to be acknowledged as derived through Mr. S.

In this pleasing poem the reader will find the view suggested in the text beautifully presented.

mediate entrance on a higher state of existence and happiness for the righteous, and the reverse for the wicked. And it also represents the resurrection as more or less important, according to the view entertained of paradise, and whether the departed believer is locally with Christ, or not. It has also some grave objections lying against it. Such for instance as the fact alluded to, that scripture nowhere represents us in *three* successive states of embodiment, which this theory manifestly does. For, however shadowy the forms which tenant the Elysian fields of the popular theology, it is beyond dispute that each blessed inhabitant of paradise is conceived and spoken of as *already* possessed of a 'spiritual body.' This leaves it very difficult to represent the resurrection as *really* so important a matter as the scriptures uniformly make it to be. Conscious, happy, embodied, what more, in reality, is a resurrection of a former body to accomplish for them?

Against those holders of the popular notion who make *heaven itself* the abode of the pious immediately after death, and yet believe in a general and simultaneous resurrection at the end of the world, and a universal judgment, there is this additional objection, which also lies to a considerable extent against those who even distinguish between paradise and heaven, namely,—that there is something of awkwardness, which the scriptures seem to avoid, in making beings who have already entered, and many ages since, on a state of happiness or misery, come from those abodes to be judged, and to receive a formal award to the very condition which has long been familiar to them. To have been in heaven with Christ for glorious ages, and then to stand at his bar for judgment, and be invited to enter heaven as their eternal home, as though they had not been there already, scarcely seems to look exactly like the scripture account, while it would almost appear to be wanting in congruity.

Nor is this all. There is another difficulty, namely,—that the idea of a saint already 'with Christ,' 'present with the Lord,' (who is in heaven, be it remembered, in his resurrection and glorified body, wherewith he ascended from the brow of Olivet) coming from heaven to earth, to glide into a body raised simultaneously from the ground, he being in reality already possessed of a spiritual body, would seem an invention which—however poetically it may be exhibited

and really it has been most beautifully described\*—has not one syllable in scripture to give it countenance. If it be a necessary deduction from other of the inspired statements,—good; but the sacred writers have nowhere represented just this sort of thing as constituting the resurrection. The new testament speaks of *the dead* awaking, arising, &c., but nowhere breathes a word about an already conscious spirit in some far off abode of tranquility, and who has been for long ages clothed in some sort of ethereal or spiritual body, coming to this earth again and getting into another body, which is endued out of the earth, or evolved out of some corpuscle that has been preserved by omnipotence for its future habitation.

Probably the exigency of the case compels the adoption of this as a necessary inference; seeing that scripture lays the greatest stress on a resurrection, speaks of a last day when

\* “A poet,” says Mr. Sheppard, in his valuable “Thoughts on Private Devotion,” chap. xxvii. “A Poet who has attempted to describe that awful period, when ‘many bodies of the saints, which slept, arose,’ represents their separate spirits, in the luminous vehicle of the intermediate state, descending, by divine command, to contemplate their own sepulchres. Rachel, the mother of patriarchs, attended by her guardian angel, approaches her lonely grave:—

‘And, as she spake, there stream’d from forth the tomb,  
A soft-ascending vapour, like the dew  
That moistens roses, or the silvery mist  
Around a vernal bower. Her spirit’s gleam  
Brighten’d the vapour, as a setting sun  
Tinges the dewy west. She marks it waive,  
And soar, and sink, and fluctuate gently still  
Near her, and yet more near; and venerates  
Creation’s changeful mysteries, profound  
In grandeur, in minuteness as profound;  
Nor knows the fond affinity, nor deems  
How soon with that soft-floating ambient veil  
Thy voice, Almighty Saviour, shall involve  
Her own enraptur’d being. Yet she bends  
To watch its beauty with a strange delight,  
While the companion seraph eyes the scene  
Elate.

Then spake the all transforming voice:—  
She sank:—she seem’d to melt in tears away;  
Delicious tears; as if her being stole  
Through some cool glade, and thence emerg’d in light,  
Amidst the fragrance of a flowery shore.  
—She wakes; she sees; she feels herself enshrin’d  
In a new form, bright, indestructible;  
And with intenser blessedness adores  
Him that hath summon’d this access of joy  
From the sepulchral shade !”†

† Klopstock’s *Messias*, XI *Gesang*.—imitated.

it should take place,\* and yet beyond dispute intimates an immediate entrance on a state of final blessedness with Christ in heaven, which the translation of Enoch and Elijah, with the appearance of Moses (who had died like other men, but who was now evidently in the same state with the two glorified men already mentioned) on the mount of transfiguration, would greatly confirm.

It is true that the second party of those who hold substantially the popular theory, but who deem the disembodied spirit to be so in reality, and to remain unclothed in the place of souls, self-conscious, but not cognisant of any other being save the intimately present Great Spirit, occupied in profound contemplation, having memory perfected, and either with placid joy anticipating the resurrection morn, or with deep despair dreading its approach,—I say it is true these avoid some of the objections which have been hinted at as affecting the views of their more numerous brethren. But while this modification has some most important advantages, it is not without some attendant difficulty. With scripture, they make an instant entrance on a state of consciousness, which is one of happiness or misery; and, in harmony with revelation, they make the resurrection epoch of greater importance than do the others, while they also scripturally avoid making a third state of embodiment.

The chief objection that I shall submit is, that, however we may feel psychologically compelled, we have no scripture warrant that I can remember for representing man as existing in a purely disembodied condition, as a naked spirit; while the view can scarcely be harmonised with some important passages to be hereafter examined, such for instance as 1 Cor. xv., 2 Cor. v. Let it be remembered however that at present I am merely stating the extant theories, which I desire to do impartially; some principles on the subject will be subsequently submitted for the consideration of the reader, but the present statement seemed to be previously desirable.

The SECOND THEORY is—That for all perceptions of an external order of things, and even for consciousness itself, man is entirely dependent on organisation. So that when

\* Query —Has the phrase, 'The Last Day' received all the elucidation of which it is capable?



this present organised frame is dissolved, there is a cessation of all conscious existence until the end of the world, when God, by his mighty power through Christ, will recall into new life all that have slept in death.

This theory concurs with scripture in exhibiting the dead as *asleep*, and so in making the resurrection to be indeed an all-important epoch, on which everything depends,—an awaking to new life. It also makes an instantaneous entrance on our final state of reward or punishment, seeing that, in reality, the moment of awaking would seem to the spirit the very moment of falling asleep, since there would be no consciousness of anything whatever in the interval, or of intervening time. And thus it certainly places judgment and its final consequences *close at hand*. As near as we are to death—so near are we to judgment, and to heaven or hell. The theory still further agrees with scripture in recognising no state of pure disembodiment; and in making but two bodily states, the *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, the present animal body, and the *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, the spiritual body.\*

But on the other hand it also has some serious difficulties to contend with. Among which, passing by those which we may leave pneumatology to suggest, it shall suffice here to allude to the fact already referred to, that Moses, for instance, who had died and been buried as other men, appeared and conversed with Christ on the mount of transfiguration; and the fact, that the Saviour promised to the dying thief to be with him *that day* in paradise, (the method of explaining which is scarcely satisfactory); and again, though we dare not lay much stress on a parable, except for the moral it establishes,—Dives is represented by our Lord as in a state of consciousness while yet his brethren lived, as is Lazarus also; while they who have died in the faith generally are said to be now inheriting the promises, &c.

**THE THIRD THEORY** is—That at death the spirit leaving

\* Among living authors who appear on the whole inclined to adopt this view, perhaps it may not be allowable to refer to Archbishop Whately, who, although he does not dogmatically affirm and defend this view, yet evidently seems inclined, stating the arguments on both sides,—to consider it as, on the whole, the least encumbered and most scriptural.

‘the earthly house of this tabernacle,’ abandons it for ever, and returns to it no more; but instead of going out naked, unclothed, assumes at once its final, its spiritual body. In other words, that the resurrection of every man [*ἀνάστασις*—standing again, rising] takes place immediately on dying. A theory which resembles the other two in one respect, namely, that it has some important scriptural recommendations in its favor, but some very formidable objections to encounter. The advantages are these;—That, in harmony with revelation, it makes no purely disembodied state, and but two bodies, the present and the resurrection body; while it presents all the sublime realities of the unseen world as close at hand, the judge before the door, and ourselves, all of us, on the very threshold of either heaven or hell. On this theory, it would be said that Enoch and Elijah passed into their final and glorified state without dying; which same condition Moses reached through death; and that every believer goes at once ‘to be with Christ,’ and every sinner is instantly doomed to the abyss,—the judgment taking place immediately on individuals as they pass into the unseen world. But it is not an easy task for its advocates fairly and satisfactorily to reconcile with this view the numerous impressive references in scripture to the last day—the end of the world—the simultaneous resurrection of the dead, and general judgment.\*

I am not solicitous to discuss the merits of these several theories, in the present work, nor would it be of any advantage to our immediate object to state which appears to me the least encumbered with difficulty, and most accordant, on the whole, with scripture. It suffices to have intimated, impartially I trust, the extant theories. To adopt either would necessitate far too long a digression by way of justification; while no disadvantage can accrue from the reader’s

\* The name of Professor Bush, of New York, is of course that which instantly suggests itself in connection with this theory, as the name of a gentleman whose learning and acuteness and piety, long devoted to the illustration of the scriptures, will secure that as much shall be said in its defence as can be said. The preparation of the present volume, joined with the pressing daily duties of the christian ministry, has prevented my examining his recent work on the subject with the care which it evidently deserves; nor did it come into my hands till the present chapter was written.

kindly consenting that the author shall, for a time, be at liberty to consider the remarks made in the introductory chapter, p. 15, as not altogether inapplicable to the details of the present subject. Beyond a doubt, all the passages of scripture, *properly understood*, will be found to support consistently one view, and only one.

Let us now proceed to connect the doctrine, or fact, of the resurrection more closely with our proper subject. And—

§ 1. Few will deny that the resurrection, as already intimated, is uniformly represented in scripture as a much more important doctrine than the popular style of the present day makes it to be.

While we heartily profess to believe in a resurrection at the end of the world, we nevertheless endeavor to animate christians by reminding them that they will, ere many suns have set, enter on a state of glory, where no tear shall ever dim the eye; and we so speak of “the intermediate state” that, in reality, the resurrection becomes comparatively unimportant; as is the case especially at such times when we attempt to console christians who are mourning the decease of pious friends. We comparatively seldom, or never, derive our *chief* consolation from the glorious fact of the resurrection; but, almost as a matter of course, talk to them of the happiness of the disembodied spirit, of its bright celestial companions, its lofty engagements and inconceivable enjoyments; leaving but little room for the resurrection to be so very important as Christ and apostles represent. And far be it from me to dispossess a single christian mind of the idea of immediate happiness at death. But all I mean to suggest is—the different manner in which the new testament speaks on the subject from that which we adopt.

Inspired men laid much greater stress on Christ’s raising the dead in incorruption, glory, and power. How exultingly does Paul dwell upon it,—‘The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.’

Now let the sounding of the trumpet be deemed a mere poetical ornament, which his sublimely exciting theme would abundantly justify, yet how evident is it that his song of triumph is elicited by the glorious resurrection which he anticipates; while *we* not seldom seem to think death thoroughly conquered by the very circumstance that it only, as we frequently sing,

“ Strikes off our chains, breaks up our cell,  
And gives us with our God to dwell.”

But when the same apostle would encourage the christians at Thessalonica ‘concerning them which were *asleep*, that they should not sorrow as others who have no hope,’ he derives his consolation from the fact of the resurrection; saying—‘If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven [where the pious are not till after their resurrection, whatever and whenever that may be] with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.’

Similar to which was our Lord’s own strain, when, full even to overflowing of tenderest sympathy, he endeavored to console the sorrowing Martha as she wept at the grave of Lazarus, ‘thy brother shall rise again.’ *We* should have said,—Weep not for him; his emancipated spirit is now set free from all the cares and griefs and anxieties of this sinful state. Seraphs are his bright companions. He is before the throne of God, and enjoys the unutterable blessedness of the beatific vision. Faith is changed into sight, and hope into fruition.

Let it be remembered I am not casting the faintest blame on this method of consoling those who weep over the remains of the pious dead; but only observing that our Lord, instead, turns her thoughts, not to the intermediate state, but to the resurrection. The ‘teacher sent from God,’ who divinely knew all things, to whose eye Hades was completely open, and who could have touched any string he



pleased, chose to direct her attention to this topic, and not to that.\*

In corroboration of the remark, that the new testament lays a much greater stress on the resurrection than is common amongst us, we may quote two or three other passages of scripture. It will be remembered that it is promised to some as a mighty blessing, and that the apostle represented himself as laboring to be found among the happy number who should attain to it.

John vi. 39, 40. ‘And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should *raise* [ἀναστήσω] it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will *raise* [ἀναστήσω] him up at the last day.

Luke xx. 35. ‘But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the *resurrection* [ἀναστάσεως] from the dead, &c.

Philippians iii. 11. ‘If by any means I might attain unto the *resurrection* [ἐξανάστασιν] of the dead.’

Now whatever explanation we adopt—whether we explain the peculiarity of such passages, as the last two for example, by supposing the adoption of current phraseology which expressed only the common opinion of the jewish people at the time, who certainly did not generally believe in a universal resurrection, and many of whom deemed it a peculiar prerogative of their own nation, (which notion of theirs, evidently alluded to in other parts of scripture, will serve, if remembered, as a key to some important passages in the new testament); or whether we suppose that the resurrection of the wicked, to undergo a second death, a resurrection therefore which would not be permanent, is not deserving the name;—we perceive that it was at all events counted a great thing by our Lord and his apostles to ‘*attain to the resurrection of the dead.*’

\* It may perhaps be objected that Christ’s words, ‘Thy brother shall rise again,’ intimate his attention of immediately raising Lazarus. This however does not appear correct. Nor does it comport with our Lord’s usual method to announce in the very beginning of the interview his full design. And v. 40, would seem to refer to some remark not recorded by the evangelist.

But there are some passages which demand a little closer attention ; and the reader is requested to observe the peculiar line of argument which the apostle adopts in—

## 1. CORINTHIANS, chap. xv.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no *resurrection* [ἀνάστασις] of the dead.

13 But if there be no *resurrection* [ἀνάστασις] of the dead, then is Christ not risen.

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ : whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the *resurrection* [ἀνάστασις] of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive, &c.

\* \* \* \* \*

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, *if the dead rise not* at all ! why are they then baptized for the dead ?

30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour ?

31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die, daily.

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, *if the dead rise not* ? let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we die.

There were some in the Corinthian church who affirmed that there was no resurrection of the dead, v. 12. To controvert this heresy the apostle takes considerable pains, not putting down his opponents by his apostolic authority, be it remembered, but by argument, sound speech that could not be condemned. Let us observe, as far as our own subject is concerned at least, what he concedes and what he asserts.

i. It is evident that he lays the greatest possible stress on the fact of a resurrection of the dead.

He even goes so far as to say that, were there no resurrection, all his efforts and self-denial as a christian, and his

labors and sufferings as an apostle, would be ill-bestowed and vain. For in that case he would receive no recompense. 'What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?' v. 32. So evident was this to his own mind, that he does not hesitate to say that, in such a case, the thoroughly Epicurean motto would be worthy of adoption—'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' v. 32, as the best that could be made of a sad case.

ii. So that it certainly appears as though he believed the maxim to be a sound one,—No resurrection, no future existence.

For only so could he bring out such a conclusion as that contained in verse 32, where he evidently teaches that, in that case, death would be the utter end of man. For on the supposition of the natural immortality of the soul, there would have been no room for the conclusion, even though the body had never experienced a resurrection. For let it be supposed that an individual in the present day should deny that there was any resurrection whatever of the dead body, and that another who believed the soul to be immortal, in argument with him, should say—'If there be no resurrection, then it is of no consequence how we live:—good or bad it will be all one at death.' Would not every by-stander, and even the denier of the resurrection himself, with one voice proclaim it a most amazing instance of the *non sequitur*?

And if any of our modern christians who believe the soul to be immortal, and who also believe in a resurrection of the body at the end of the world, had been standing by the apostle when he dictated this, would they not have been strongly tempted to interpose with an earnest remonstrance, couched in some such strain as this,—'But, Paul, even granting that there were no resurrection, it would by no means follow that it would be all one at death, whether a man had led a virtuous or a vicious life. You surely forgot that the soul is capable of joy or sorrow, quite independently of the body, and can be either happy in heaven, or racked with anguish in hell, and will be through all the ages that have to elapse before the resurrection that we anticipate occurs. And surely the bliss or misery of the soul after death will depend on what we have been here; so that you ought not to say that, if there be no resurrection, it is of no consequence how we act. You are surely staking

too much, and laying far too great a stress on the resurrection.' What answer the apostle would make, it is not for me to say. He sometimes rejoined with a 'Wilt thou know O vain man——' or he might have said significantly, 'I think I have the mind of Christ.'

For my own part, I have not the presumption to disagree with an apostle, and always rest satisfied with either the argumentative processes, or the authoritative assertions of inspired men. And I therefore receive with implicit faith the apostolic doctrine contained in the conclusion, '*What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?*'

No one can deny the apostle to teach that, if there were no resurrection of the dead, it could not be of the least consequence, after death, what had been the nature of the life led on earth, and that the best plan, in such a case, would be to make the most of present pleasures.

iii. And, in connection with this, he teaches *that but for Christ there would be no resurrection*; that is, if Christ had not successfully mediated, as proved by his own resurrection, there would have been no resurrection of the dead. And if no resurrection, no conscious existence after death, rendering it worth while to be religious here. For otherwise there would have been no room for his concession, that, in that case, his pious labors were vain, and that to seize the animal pleasures of this life would be as good a thing as a man could then do. And so at death man would have utterly perished. And this because they would then have been 'yet in their sins.' In this way then 'death passed on all men, because all have sinned.'

The entire scope of the argument shows that it is in this sense he uses the word 'perished.' 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins: *Then* they also who are fallen asleep in Christ ARE PERISHED, v. 18. To substitute the notion of misery after death, instead of the idea of a literal perishing, would just do away with all the force of the apostle's argument throughout. For he proceeds all along upon the supposition, that it is the fact of a resurrection that alone makes it worth our while to scorn present pleasure, and to labor agreeably to the will of Christ. Everything depends on a resurrection of the dead. Now there is such a resurrection for mankind, because Christ is risen: whose resurrection is a proof of the sufficiency of his atonement for the sins of the world. So the resurrec-



tion of man is proved by, and grows out of, so as to be dependent upon, Christ's resurrection. If then Christ had not interposed, no man would have risen. And this non-rising, remaining under the power of death, would be 'perishing.' And this 'perishing' would have been so complete and final, as that, had it been the prospect before him, Paul would himself have said, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'

So then when Adam died—had not the mediatorial system supervened on the original law of humanity—he would have perished altogether, according to the threatening, 'Dying thou shalt die.' But while *he* was only made a living soul, the second Adam was made a LIFE-GIVING spirit, who will by his mighty power bring all the dead to life again, to be judged every man according to his works. So that while, in the supposed case (that is, of no resurrection) Paul would have said 'What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?' and would have esteemed the christian life to have been the most miserable of all, v. 19, yet his triumphant language was, 'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: for since by man came *death*, by man came also the resurrection from the dead,' (20, 21) on which resurrection we see he makes everything to depend.

It may perhaps be objected against me that in this paragraph the apostle is not so much employed on what we now exclusively understand by the word 'resurrection,' as on a future state of existence in general. And possibly an attempt may be made to distinguish between the word *ἀνάστασις* and *ἐγέρσις*, according to Dwight, for example, who says—

"The subject of this chapter is the *ἀνάστασις*, or *future existence of man*. This word is commonly, but often erroneously, rendered *resurrection*. So far as I have observed it usually denotes *our existence beyond the grave*.\* Its original and literal meaning is, to *stand up*, or to *stand again*. As *standing* is the appropriate posture of *life, consciousness, and activity*, and *lying down* the appropriate posture of *the dead*,

\* He evidently, from the sequel, means to say existence after *death*, for existence beyond *the grave* i. e. of the body raised from the grave, is what is usually understood by the term.

*the unconscious, and the inactive*, this word is not unnaturally employed to denote the future state of spirits, who are living, conscious and active beings. Many passages of scripture would have been rendered more intelligible, and the thoughts contained in them more just and impressive, had this word been translated agreeably to its real meaning," &c. *System of Theology, Serm. CLXV.*

But notwithstanding the distinction he draws between the two words, the word *ἀνάστασις* is often employed to denote the resurrection, whatever may be the exact idea thereof; and not only often, but *generally*, as a greek concordance will show; which will also show that the speakers and writers of the new testament used the words interchangeably, in a manner which will not bear out Dwight's distinction.

And if an attempt should be made to render *ἀνάστασις*, future existence, as something distinct from a proper resurrection, the strangest confusion would arise, more especially among those of us who prefer the first of the three theories suggested, and whom it would almost send in quite another direction; seeing it is this same word which is used, for example, in the following, besides many other passages,—

Luke xiv. 14. 'Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection [*ἀναστήσει*] of the just.'

John v. 28—9. 'The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection [*ἀνάστασιν*] of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection [*ἀνάστασιν*] of damnation.

John xi. 24. 'Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise in the resurrection [*ἀναστήσει*] at the last day.'

1. Cor. xv. 42. 'So also is the resurrection [*ἀνάστασις*] of the dead. It is sown,' &c.

There are many similar passages, but these will suffice. And the reader will perceive that in these the word *ἀνάστασις* is used in connection with *the last day* and *the final reward* to the good and evil. So that the holders of the first theory could not safely consent to the proposed rendering

which, made by Dwight, is fatal to his own scheme of the resurrection, as given in the very sermon which he commences with the criticism I have quoted.

But this change which he advocates, would not in the least degree interfere with, much less set aside, the only point for the sake of which I trouble the reader with this chapter on the resurrection. For my object is to show that the death threatened to Adam was extinction of being. Which I partly do (besides other reasons) by showing that the scriptures make so much of the resurrection effected by Christ, that everything depends upon it—no resurrection, no future existence. Now if it could be shown, according to Dwight, that in this paragraph the apostle is speaking of a future existence simply, my argument stands precisely as it did before. It is quite untouched by the change. Nay, we reach the position I have taken all the sooner, and I have not to come into collision with nearly so many of my brethren. For all concede that we are indebted to Christ for ‘the resurrection;’ and if the term *ἀνάστασιν* be used generically for ‘future existence,’ as Dwight says, then—since Paul declares this to be the result of Christ’s mediation—my object is gained the sooner, by a simple reference to v. 21, which sustains the whole weight of my assertion; ‘For since by man came death, by man came also the future existence of man.’ Then (without my having to show that for future existence we are dependent on a resurrection) we have a distinct apostolic assertion, which there is no gainsaying, that for a future existence at all, we are indebted to ‘Christ our life,’ the second Adam, who is ‘the Life-giving Spirit.’ Thus scriptural is the position to which I humbly seek to draw the attention of my brethren beloved in the Lord.

And further than this. As by adopting the proposed rendering, we gain a most clear and decisive idea of one part of the antithesis employed in v. 21, namely, future existence,—we of course have the key to the meaning of the other member of the sentence, ‘death,’ which must therefore mean cessation of being, thus;—“As by man came that death which is the cessation of conscious existence, by man came also the renewal of conscious existence.” So that, either way, I submit that the position taken up in this work, in reference to the original threatening of death, is argumentatively fair, tenable, and scriptural.

And the main idea which runs through the apostle's argument, namely, that future conscious existence is connected with, and dependent upon, the resurrection, if not identical therewith, as Dwight's rendering would in reality make it, seems involved in our Lord's own discourse with the Sadducees, which deserves our careful examination. See Mark xii. 18—27. Luke xx. 27—38, and

MATTHEW, chap. xxii.

23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, *which say that there is no resurrection*, [ἀναστάσις] and asked him,

24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25 Now there were with us seven brethren; and the first when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27 And last of all the woman died also.

28 Therefore *in the resurrection*, [ἀναστάσει] whose

wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

30 For *in the resurrection* [ἀναστάντος] they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

31 But *as touching the resurrection* [ἀναστάσεως] *of the dead*, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living.

33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

Let it be remembered, that the one point in dispute was that touching *the resurrection of the dead*. This was therefore the *one* point to which Christ addressed himself; as is also shown by verse 23, which introduces the narrative; and by verse 31, where our Lord formally mentions it as that of which he was about to treat—‘*That the dead are raised*, even Moses showed you at the bush.’ How then does Christ prove from the Pentateuch, which the Sadducees acknowledged, that the doctrine of the *resurrection* was really (though perhaps seminally) contained therein? which was precisely what they denied. Simply by one indisputable circumstance, namely, that after the decease of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God still called himself their God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham,’



&c. To this Christ adds the comment, which would be unquestioned, that ‘God is not the God of the dead,’—the non-existent—the utterly perished, (in which sense the Sadducees, only partially wrong, used the word ‘death’) but of the living. And his argumentative deduction—not indeed formally stated at the close, because it had been at the beginning—was, that *therefore there was a resurrection!*

Observe, the question just then opened was *not* concerning *the separate and conscious existence of the soul after death*. And therefore it was not to prove this, that he showed that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not utterly ceased to be. His argument, to be satisfactory against that particular class of objectors before him, and demonstrative of the point he had undertaken to prove, shows the living again which he predicted, to be dependent on a resurrection. To deduce from the title God had assumed that, therefore, since he is not the God of the dead but of the living, the patriarchs were still existent, in a separate state, would not have met the case at all, *unless the living after death be itself the resurrection*. His argument, strictly logical when correctly stated, is this:—As God is not the God of the dead, of those who have finally and for ever ceased to be, there must be a resurrection of those of whom he calls himself the God.

I question whether *we* should consider ourselves quite free to reason (for it is reasoning,—and not authoritative assertion) precisely as our Lord did on this occasion. A modern teacher would find no argument at all for a resurrection, as we commonly understand it, in the phrase quoted by Christ; but would easily find one, because of prevalent opinion, for the continuously conscious existence of the patriarchs, independently of the bodies they had laid down. We should have said,—

God is not the God of the dead [the utterly perished]  
but of the living,  
But he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
Therefore these still live, and as the resurrection has not  
taken place, they live in a separate state.

With us it would be a striking and satisfactory proof of a continuance of conscious existence after death—but *no proof whatever of a resurrection*; and yet it is to prove this

last *exclusively* that our Lord, who could not have reasoned inaccurately or sophistically, adduces it; and his acute and learned disputants, to their deep mortification, were forced to acquiesce, and stood confounded by his wisdom. Quite contrary to the inference we should have drawn, our Lord's reasoning, which is perfectly syllogistic, if we bear in mind the thesis he undertook, makes the life, which he therefore predicates of the patriarchs, to be one with and dependant upon the resurrection, in seeming accordance with either the second or third theory of resurrection; thus,—

God is not the God of the dead [utterly and eternally perished, which was the sense in which the Sadducees used it, with whom he was disputing] but of the living. But he calls himself the God of the Patriarchs, Therefore these still live—or will live again [which is the same thing with him to whom the future is the present, and who calls the things that are not, but shall be, as though they already were.]

But then, as already intimated, since it was a *resurrection* our Lord undertook to establish, which he establishes only by proving *a life* after death, the life which carries with it a proof of resurrection, must either be itself identical therewith, or else dependant thereupon.

It might indeed be said in reply to this, that our Lord argued with the Sadducees on their own principles, as though in reality he had addressed them thus;—"You affirm man to be entirely dependant on bodily organisation for conscious existence, so that when the corporeal frame is dissolved by death he ceases to be. But since you admit the authority of the Pentateuch, you ought to have perceived that even Moses in whom you believe tacitly confutes your gloomy tenet—that man never lives again. For he says that God called himself the God of the patriarchs long after they had died. Now you do not suppose God would call himself the God or Father and Friend of any whom, notwithstanding their pious confidence, he had suffered to pass for ever into nothingness. This would make the title 'their God' perfectly unmeaning, and indeed unworthy. The Mighty God does not so deal with those whom he vouchsafes to favor, as to let them drop out of being for ever, as

your Sadducees suppose. So that evidently his servants are not clean perished, but will live again. And since this is plain, the next step is equally so. For since you deny man to be possessed of an immortal spirit that can consciously subsist without a corporeal organism, it must follow, from what has already been said, that—if you are right on this point—there is a resurrection of the body, so that they shall live again, and God's title be vindicated when he calls himself still 'their God.' ”

I have endeavored to put this objection as forcibly as I can, as it behoved me to do since it was present to my own mind, and notwithstanding the probability that some of my readers, unprepared for the otherwise inevitable conclusion, will be pleased at my providing an answer to my own argument, which I allow to be possessed of considerable force, nor would it surprise me if many of my readers deemed it perfectly satisfactory. It does not however appear to me to meet the case. For First,—

The air of the narrative altogether does not at all favor the notion that our Lord was occupying the ground of an adroit polemic, who would be content to silence an acute opponent by adopting a strain of argument which, while it would shut the mouth of the objector for the time, is nevertheless not correct in itself, not true in the abstract. To conquer in a controversy is a small thing. Too many indeed most unworthily contend for victory rather than truth. But as this is invariably the mark of an essentially little mind—no matter in whom found—and a most unworthy, and injurious, and even fatal habit, so we are quite sure that 'the Faithful and True Witness' was infinitely above taking pleasure in the mere discomfiture and confusion of opponents; who, had they returned to the discussion, taking other ground, might in their turn have shown his apparent proof to be no proof at all of the thing he undertook argumentatively to establish; and might have suggested to the three recording evangelists, that they need not occupy any portion of their brief narrative with the record of this incident, inasmuch as their Master's argument was no independent proof of a resurrection—but a proof thereof only on the Sadducean principle—no organisation, no life. For if this ground should be abandoned, the apparent proof of a resurrection vanishes into thin air again; so that their Rabbi has not really and substantially proved a resurrection,

but only *silenced* a party that came to him with an objection, and thus gained a momentary advantage over an opponent;—a triumph indeed for the abler disputant personally, but no gain to the cause of truth.

To illustrate this let us suppose some Sadducee, after a momentary surprise at the ease and adroitness with which the Galilean had completely silenced his party, resuming thus:—"Rabbi, we do honor to the wonderful wisdom which dwells within thee; and never had we dreamed that any proof of so incredible a doctrine as that of the resurrection (which the common ignorant people hold indeed, and our opponents the Pharisees, who are cunning enough to adopt the most popular belief,) would ever have been established from the writings of our great lawgiver. And my brethren here have drunk the wine of astonishment, and are filled therewith; while our enemies who make long their phylacteries, shoot out the lip at us, saying, Aha! But let their triumph be short. Though in truth one of our tenets appears to be disproved, yet verily *their* doctrine is not therefore established. We have hitherto believed indeed that there is no immaterial soul, capable of existing independently of the body, and have therefore denied a separate state; while, finding no syllable about a future life, least of all about a resurrection of the body, in the writings of our father Moses, we have denied the doctrine of the Pharisees as a superstition.

"But admitting the authority of Moses, and the validity of the principle—that God would scarcely call himself the God of the eternally non-existent, we now must assuredly concede that there is therefore some sort of life for the children of God after death. But this is all that thou hast established. While indeed thou hast adopted the very basis of our system, namely,—No organisation, no life.

"For either the sentence thou hast quoted from Moses contains really a proof of the resurrection, or it does not. *If it does not*, we are not confuted touching the resurrection, and nothing has been done; for it was a resurrection thou undertookest to make good. *If it does*, it does this only by first of all admitting and affirming our own philosophy to be correct, namely, that man does not exist after death as a pure spirit, and that for conscious life there must be organisation, which the Pharisees deny. Or, if thou refusest this axiom of ours, then, thou hast established from Moses



a *life* after death indeed, but verily no resurrection of the body. So that while *we* must henceforth admit on the authority of Moses, whose sense thou hast so ably elicited, a life after death, (which indeed we can allow much more easily than the notion of a resurrection of dead bodies,—a re-assembling of multitudinous scattered particles which from the creation have existed in all sorts of combinations, and have helped to form the bodies of numerous other individuals,)—we are confirmed by the failure of thy argument in our disbelief of a resurrection, which if any scribe could have established thou couldest, as indeed thou didst undertake to establish it.”

But not to prolong this imagined reply on the part of some Sadducee present, and which appears to me to contain a sufficient answer to the chief and only forcible objection that I think can be advanced against the principle I have elicited from our Lord's discourse, I do submit that the air of the narrative altogether seems to carry the conviction that the three evangelists, who have each of them narrated it at unusual length, deemed it a most striking argument, and recorded it, not merely as a wonderful instance of what may be called cleverness in silencing an opponent, but a most wonderful illustration of the astonishing wisdom with which our Lord spake, and a divinely irrefragable proof, derived from the Pentateuch itself, of that grand doctrine which he undertook to establish; and which we therefore cannot consent to look upon as a striking illustration of the *argumentum ad hominem*, and nothing more, which is all the supposed objection makes it to be. By how much the argument is sound and good, and of independent value, by so much must it of course be held to establish the very point our Lord undertook to prove. And then its entire force, like that of the apostle's argument to the Corinthians, is, as already stated, to this effect,—No resurrection, no future life.

But perhaps it may be urged again, that the word *ἀνάστασις* is used generically for future existence, and not so much for that resurrection, to express which it is usually appropriated. And indeed Dwight argues that it does generally mean, and especially in this passage, simply the existence of the soul after death.

Two answers suggest themselves. The first is—That the Sadducees, who came to Christ thinking completely to silence him, would, as a matter of course, being practised and subtle disputants, select the more difficult and less credible of two obnoxious tenets, held by an opponent, in order the more easily to perplex him. Now the existence of the soul after death, is one thing; the resurrection of a body—all whose particles have been dissipated and have entered into countless other combinations,—and the re-occupancy thereof by the conscious spirit, some thousands of years or ages hence, is a second and very different thing. To the eye of reason this latter tenet would appear very much less credible than the former. Now the Sadducees, I say, would as a matter of course choose the more difficult of the two, in order the more surely to succeed. And accordingly we find that it was the resurrection they fastened on. For their question shows this, ‘In the resurrection, *whose wife shall she be?*’ Which inquiry proves that it was not about a separate existence of the naked spirit, that they were come to dispute, but about the resurrection, generally believed in and properly so called, an embodied state,—and still future, (as the phrase shows—‘*shall she be?*’) to which such a question might not be wholly irrelevant.

My second reply as intimated on a previous page, is—That if ἀνάστασις refer to the existence after death simply, then, since this word, either as a noun or a verb, is commonly used to express the resurrection *from the grave*, the rising again *at the last day*, at the end of the world, &c., and since we also believe in a conscious existence immediately after death, it will have to be maintained, in order to be consistent, that the phrases ‘last day,’ ‘end of the world,’—are used relatively to the individual, or in accordance with popular phraseology current at the time; seeing that this ἀνάστασις takes place at once on dying, this very ἀνάστασις which is elsewhere represented as taking place at the last day, &c. Nor will I affirm that this view is therefore necessarily incorrect. That which contradicts our previous notion is not for that reason false. But I bring forward the consequences to show that this endeavor to escape from the view I have taken, only renders me a service, by shortening my process. For to repeat what was said on the xvth to the Corinthians,—if the future existence of man be itself the resurrection, then, since every christian con-

cedes the resurrection to be effected by Christ, it follows that but for the Saviour there would have been no conscious existence for the sinner after death. 'By man came also the resurrection [*ἀνάστασις*] of the dead.'

§ It has been already submitted that scripture recognises only two bodies for man—the present animal-body, *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, and the spiritual-body, *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, and at the same time knows nothing of any conscious existence in a perfectly disembodied state. Which of course makes the resurrection [leaving it as yet an open question, what is meant by it precisely, and when it takes place] to be all-important. It at the same time undoubtedly teaches the immediate enjoyment by the saint of the presence of his Saviour, and the blessedness of heaven. In confirmation of which remarks, the reader is requested to study attentively in its connection—

#### 2. CORINTHIANS, chap. iv.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

18 While we look not at

the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

#### Chapter v.

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality

might be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

At the close of chap. iv. the apostle testifies how lightly his manifold afflictions sat upon him. And afflictions

were they of no ordinary kind,—‘troubled on every side—perplexed—persecuted—always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus—always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake;’ or, as he speaks in a subsequent chapter, when he is compelled to compare himself with others—‘in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one: thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.’ Yet with sublimest heroism he points to calamities and sufferings which would drink up the spirits of most of us, and says ‘These light afflictions! these light afflictions!’ Do we ask the secret of this victorious composure? He tells us that he was habitually regarding the unseen realities of the next state, ‘Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, *shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*’

Here we perceive distinctly that it was his confidence in a resurrection that lightened his spirit of its load, and cheered him on his lonely and stormy way. We ought to compel ourselves to notice this, agreeing exactly as it does with his wont on other occasions. For it was his habit to console himself with the thought of being raised from the dead, which was the ‘recompense of the reward’ unto which ‘he had respect;’ as the first chapter of this epistle also shows, for having said ‘We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch, that we despaired even of life,’ he goes on to say, ‘But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God *who raiseth the dead.*’ 2. Cor. i. 8–9.

But let us return to our proper passage. The apostle having said that notwithstanding all his troubles he persevered in his arduous course, animated with the confident hope that God who raised up Jesus *would also raise him up*, v. 14, regarded without displacency the perishing of his outward man, v. 16, seeing that his afflictions would work out



for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, v. 17. For he was accustomed not to look at the visible, which is the fugitive, but at the unseen and eternal. v. 18.

Let it be observed that all this grows directly and continuously out of v. 14, (v. 15 being parenthetical, and arising out of the last clause of the preceding verse). The being *raised up by Jesus* is the thought which, as the grand source of his joy, and secret of his career, he is dwelling on, which reconciles him to the perishing of the outward man, and makes his afflictions light as the gossamer. Our division of chapters here is peculiarly unfortunate; v. 1—8 being but a continuation of the interesting subject, the word, *For*, marking the close logical connection,—‘For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved,’ called before our outward man perishing, ‘we have a building of God, a house not made with hands,’ that is, another body,—‘eternal in the heavens.’ Which does not mean that the body he would have was at that time in heaven waiting for him to enter into it, but it was a heavenly body, a body invested wherewith, he should dwell for ever in the heavens. But it may be allowed me to paraphrase the entire passage, without pausing to give the reasons for the rendering I shall adopt, which I trust will be obvious to the general reader. Continuing the thought which he had announced towards the close of chapter iv. he thus proceeds,—

“For we know full well, that if our body, which alone persecutors can hurt, or hunger and fatigue affect, were to be overcome of death, which sooner or later must be, we are quite assured that we shall be found more gloriously arrayed. This indeed is a vile body in which we often groan, feeling acutely the ills of life, but Christ is able to endow us with a body fashioned like unto his own glorious body. And such awaits us. I have called the present body a house, and as such what is it but an earthly house—a house of dust—in the formation of which human beings were (instrumentally) employed; but the body I shall have, or to keep to the figure, the house which awaits me, is in no-wise of human origin [not made with hands] it is celestial [in the heavens] and unlike this changing decaying structure, is eternal.

“Oh! how I long to find myself in this celestial body, [earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with my house which

is from heaven.] I say, I could long for evening to undress, to lay down this gross corporeal investiture, and find myself in that body of heavenly texture which awaits me. For I have no fear of being found utterly disembodied; and though, if such a thing might be, I could prefer to pass without dying into my ultimate condition as Enoch and Elijah did, yet am I more than ready to welcome the sharpest pangs of death, in order to find myself relieved of all the ills attendant on humanity in its present condition, and invested with that spiritual body in which I shall, oh glorious hour! find myself present with the Lord. For in this body I am absent from my Saviour, in that I shall be for ever with the Lord."

To me it appears that this purposely free paraphrase gives the exact idea of the passage. In which Paul contrasts the present body with the next; longs to lay down the one and assume the other, which he calls *eternal*, and *on the assumption of which* he would find himself present with the Lord; and recognises nothing as intervening between quitting the one body and finding himself in the other and eternal one, the investiture with which was essential to his being present with the Lord. The eighth verse is the logical conclusion of the whole.

Now remembering that scripture recognises no perfectly disembodied state, and only two bodies, and that the next is the resurrection body, we are again conducted to the same conclusion to which Matt. xxiii. and 1. Cor. xv. brought us, and are again reminded of the grand importance of the resurrection, which is a more capital doctrine in scripture than in our modern systems of theology. And we may just refer to another text which seems to look in the same direction.—

1. Cor. i. 30. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Here there is a beautiful order maintained in the ideas suggested, and a very admirable gradation till the highest good is reached. Paul speaking as a Jew, and using abstract terms instead of expressing himself as would be natural with us, here teaches that Christ first of all enlightens the mind, makes us wise: which we all know to be the first thing in order. Then, when the enlightened sinner, per-

ceiving his condition and his need of another righteousness than his own, asks how can man be just with God, Christ is revealed to him as the 'Lord our righteousness;' or in other words, through Christ he is justified, or, made righteous in the legal sense. Then his next great want is to be made holy; and Christ begins and carries on the work of rendering him morally meet for an inheritance on high, by his word and example and spirit; so that he becomes holy by Christ. But though enlightened, pardoned, and made holy, he must die, and then what advantageth it him, what will he be the better for all that he has experienced? Christ is still further revealed to him as his Redemption, that is, (here) as he who will redeem him from death and the grave, [according to the use of the word, Rom. viii. 23 and Hos. xiii. 14, which last passage Paul quotes to this effect 1. Cor. xv. 44—5.] So then Christ crowns his enlightening, justifying, and sanctifying work, by gloriously raising such from the dead,—the day of which is called the 'day of redemption,' unto which the believer is sealed, Eph. iv. 30.

All that this passage is quoted for, is additionally to show the greater stress the apostle laid on the resurrection than we are accustomed to do, who (unlike Paul, who represents himself and fellow christians—Rom. viii. 23, as groaning within themselves, waiting for the resurrection—'the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body,') long to be unclothed, to lay down the body, and find ourselves in the world of spirits, which we represent as possessing all the advantages which inspired men expected only in the resurrection state. But we so conceive of the 'intermediate state' as to make the resurrection state comparatively unimportant. Perhaps it might be found not quite impossible to harmonise perfectly the confident expectation of more than all the blessings we promise ourselves at death, with the general tenor of the apostolic scriptures; but this is no part of our proposed design. And the present chapter may best conclude with a summary which will connect it with the subject we have undertaken, and which, laying down only general principles, will commit us to no particular theory.

i. There is a resurrection of the dead, generally. This however, which is no deduction of reason, is a doctrine peculiar to revelation, and constitutes one of its grandest disclosures.

ii. The final judgment of each individual, with its award to heaven or hell, is consequent upon resurrection.

iii. The resurrection state was that which apostles longed for, earnestly desiring to find themselves in their house from heaven, or heavenly house, that is, their second, their spirit body.

iv. Future conscious existence is connected with, and dependent upon, if not identical with, resurrection, so that—No resurrection; no future life.

v. The resurrection grows out of the mediatorship of Christ, so that—No Mediator, no resurrection, and therefore, no future state.' 'I am the resurrection and the life.'

From which it follows, that had not the mediatorial system supervened on the fall of man, and had the sentence been consequently executed on Adam and remained in force, he would have utterly ceased to exist at death. But while, to repeat a remark already made, he was only made a living soul or creature, liable to dissolution, the second Adam is a life-giving Spirit, who will by his mighty power bring all the dead to life again, to be judged every man according to his work. When all that are found to have embraced the salvation of the Son of God, shall, according to his promise, have everlasting life; they shall not die any more; shall never perish; shall have a right to the tree of life, and crowned with immortality shall dwell in his blissful presence, 'where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.' What follows however upon the resurrection we had better inquire in a distinct chapter. It suffices here to connect the present with the preceding, and to have shown how the scripture doctrine of the resurrection supports the views already suggested.

And thus we recognise how unutterably important is the evangelical doctrine of the resurrection, and with what reason apostles laid so much stress upon it as they did. For, first among their own countrymen, most of whom already reckoned confidently on a resurrection, accounting highly thereof as a prerogative peculiar to their favored nation,—these perfectly taught teachers of a pure christianity, '*preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*' And when they entered among the Gentiles it was evidently one of the very few simple but grand truths which they laid down as a basis; and so Paul, in the very metropolis



of Grecian literature and refinement, ‘preached unto them *Jesus and the resurrection.*’ While, as we have seen, they were accustomed to soothe their own agitated minds, and to animate their spirits, with the thought of *being raised up by Jesus.*

But while this is not the proper point at which fully to reply to an obvious objection, we may be allowed just to glance at the difficulty, and suggest a solution. It will occur then to some, that, if for future existence we are dependent on a resurrection, and for a resurrection we are dependent on a Mediator, this doctrine, while it shines with a divine brightness on the saved, bears with intense awfulness on all those who ‘rise to shame and everlasting contempt,’ and to endure the horrors of the Second Death! The intervention of Christ, it will be said, while an unutterable blessing to the righteous, is absolutely a heavy curse on the impenitent; for, had there been no such Mediator, at death they would have ceased to be, whereas now they are raised up to be judged, and ‘punished with everlasting destruction.’ Good had it been for them if there never had been a Saviour at all. This is true. We admit it to be a most just and weighty remark.

But it does not bear against us as an objection any more than it bears against the popular view. For on the common notion, will it not be unutterably worse, and to all eternity, for those who reject Christ, than if they had never heard his name, or there had been no Redeemer? Is not precisely this ‘the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light?’ And is it not perfectly in keeping with all God’s other principles of government, that our responsibilities are proportioned to our advantages, and that our greatest curses grow out of our greatest blessings neglected. It is true that the mediation of Christ,—as the Shekinah between the Israelites and the Egyptians was all light and glorious to the one people, and gloom and darkness and terror to the other,—is an infinite blessing only to the righteous, and that it does render the lot of those who obey not the gospel greatly more terrible than it would have been, had Christ never died for our offences, and rose again for our justification, and besought us to come unto him and be saved. This is the very doctrine of scripture, and it is level to our own sense of right.

## CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

---

New Testament Doctrine of Immortality—Two distinct classes of texts—Living for ever promised on one hand, Everlasting Destruction threatened on the other—Meaning—Christ the Great Teacher, 2. Tim. i. 10.—Eternal Life and Second Death—how to be understood—literally or metaphorically—Prefatory Considerations—five—Literal sense preferred—only possible sense in many passages—in some where Life is a matter of promise—Objections considered—Result—Inference.

LET the reader pardon a momentary recapitulation in order to connect the present with the preceding chapters.

As, on the one hand, reason cannot prove the immortality of man, so neither, on the other, do we find the doctrine recorded on the first page of revelation, as a truth which Adam knew on the first day of his creation. Contrariwise, the evidence leads us to believe that our first parents must have understood the threatening of death as denoting a return to that state of blank nothingness from which the Almighty fiat had so recently called them, and from which we are saved only by the mediatorial scheme, of which the resurrection is a part.

But having ourselves reminded the reader of a distinction between a future state and immortality, and perceiving, as every one must at a glance, that even a universal resurrection does not necessarily imply a universal immortality, since it is quite conceivable, to say the least, that one who shall live again may die again;—the very next question which arises is,—Will the incorrigible sinner, who for sufficient reasons may live again after death, live for ever? or What is his final destiny?

And here we are reminded that, according to an apostle, Christ is especially the grand teacher of immortality; so that instead of lingering in the groves of Eden, or passing

our time in the tents of nomadic patriarchs, or interrogating the God-favored leader of the Israelites, we turn at once to the pages of the new testament, as on such a theme our most explicit and every way most satisfactory oracle.

§ What then does the new testament reveal concerning immortality? We have not found it the inherent, absolute, and inalienable prerogative of man as man, prior to our entering the school of Christ; what shall we find here? Much about 'Life,' 'Eternal Life,' 'Immortality,'—But what? We will bring the various passages together, with those also which speak of those unhappy and inexcusable sinners who do not come to Christ for the blessings of salvation, and then see to what conclusion they conduct us.

'The righteous shall go into *life eternal*.' 'He shall receive in the world to come, *eternal life*.' 'He that believeth in him shall have *eternal life*.' 'Whoso believeth should have *everlasting life*.' 'He that heareth my words hath *everlasting life*.' 'That every one who seeth the Son may have *everlasting life*.' 'He that believeth on me hath *everlasting life*.' 'Whoso drinketh my blood hath *eternal life*.' 'I give unto my sheep *eternal life*, and they shall never perish.' 'He should give *eternal life* to as many as thou hast given him.' 'To them who seek for glory, honor, and immortality, *eternal life*.' 'Being free from sin, ye have the end, *everlasting life*.' 'The gift of God is *eternal life*, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' 'He that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap *life everlasting*.' 'Them that should hereafter believe on him to *life everlasting*.' 'In hope of *eternal life*, which God promised.' 'And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even *eternal life*.' 'The record that God hath given to us, *eternal life*.' 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto *eternal life*.'

'He that believeth not the Son *shall not see life*.' 'The preaching of the cross is foolishness to *them that perish*.' 'Vessels of wrath *fitted to destruction*.' 'Many walk whose end is *destruction*.' 'Who shall be punished with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord.' 'Lusts which drown men in *destruction and perdition*.' 'Them which draw back unto *perdition*.' But these as natural brute beasts made to be *taken and destroyed* shall *utterly perish* in their own corruption.' 'The day of judgment, and *perdition of ungodly men*.' 'He will *burn up the chaff* with unquenchable fire.' 'For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, *shall be stubble*. And the day that cometh *shall burn them up*, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.' 'As the vessels of a potter shall they be *broken to shivers*.'

'If ye live after the flesh, *ye shall die*.' 'Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the *lake of fire*.' 'This is the *second death*.'

We observe one thing very prominent on the face of all these declarations, namely, that he alone hath everlasting life who seeks salvation from Christ. It is the prerogative of the true believer to say with the apostle, 'this corruptible must put on *incorruption*, and this mortal must put on *immortality*.' It is they only 'who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor and immortality,' that will have 'eternal life;' it is their exclusive privilege to have their names enrolled in the 'book of life,' and to 'eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,' and to drink of the 'pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.' While the 'second death,' 'perdition,' 'everlasting destruction,'—whatever may be meant by these terms, which we will presently examine,—await those who 'will not come unto Christ, that they might have life.'

Of course we are not unaware of the common practice of explaining 'life' to mean happiness, and 'immortality' to mean an eternity of bliss; while 'destruction,' 'perdition,' 'death,' are explained to mean an eternity of miserable existence. Nor will I deny that 'life' may be sometimes used in the sense alleged. But then that it is invariably used so, no one will affirm on the other part; while every one will admit that it is frequently to be understood in its primary and common signification. So that we must try to discover the precise force of the words as used in the numerous passages now adduced, which are presented above merely as generally illustrative of the manner in which the scriptures uniformly speak of the future portion of the two opposite classes of mankind,—the pious and the ungodly.

And without casting any unworthy imputation on any parties, I may be allowed to say that it does seem to me that unwarrantable liberty is taken when these words, touching the future state, are invariably taken in their secondary sense; their primary being set aside, chiefly because expositors have previously determined that all men, without exception, are immortal; which assumption of course necessitates their seeking for some other than the natural interpretation, when *Immortality* is promised on the one hand, and *Destruction* threatened on the other. For if man be absolutely immortal, an endowment already possessed cannot be a matter of promise; and so also if he be immor-



tal, he cannot literally 'perish,' or 'be punished with everlasting destruction;' and thus another sense has to be sought for such terms. For my own part, I am disposed to urge in its obvious sense the exhortation of our Lord,—'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear them who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.' Matt. x. 28.

But of course the reader demands to know the grounds on which I understand the terms alluded to in their literal sense. To this subject therefore let us come, and may the illuminating Spirit, that inspired the scriptures, be our guide to a correct interpretation of them. The course we propose to pursue is, first to make a few general observations, and afterwards examine separately some of the passages quoted.

§ But before we proceed on this course, let us advert somewhat more distinctly than we have done to the apostle's declaration that Christ is the great revealer of immortality. For it were utterly undesirable to leave this declaration unnoticed, and especially as by far the ablest of my opponents deems the text alluded to a sufficient proof of an eternal existence for all mankind. I refer of course to—

2. Tim. i. 9—10. Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Let the reader distinctly understand, however, and please to keep in mind, that I by no means adduce this text to prove that Christ is the bestower of immortality (though we shall perhaps find this to be the doctrine of some other parts of Holy Writ) but am quite satisfied with the ordinary interpretation. Nor will I object to those expositors who take 'life and immortality' to be put by hendiadys for 'immortal life.' Let us then understand this text to teach that Christ hath authoritatively revealed the grand fact of an existence beyond the grave, and that for ever; that he has thrown the full light of certainty on what before was but dimly guessed at, or doubted of, or absolutely ridiculed by heathen philosophers, while it was not properly understood by the Jews themselves. For though it surprises me to find that any can believe the *pious* under the patriarchal

and mosaic dispensations to be altogether ignorant of a future life, when the apostle so distinctly affirms that 'they sought a better country, that is a heavenly,' and 'had respect to the recompence of the reward;' yet, on the other hand, it is not easy fairly to extract the doctrine from the early portions of scripture, while, beyond all doubt, the promises and threatenings made to the Israelites related to temporal blessings and calamities.\* And so late as the very time of our Lord's abode on earth, the best educated and most acute of the Jews themselves disbelieved a future life altogether. So that no one can fairly allege that the subject did not need to be authoritatively settled. Let the text be taken as an assertion that Christ has dispelled the darkness which hovered over the tomb, and has established once for all the doctrine of a never-ending existence. This was an unutterably glorious Fact for apostles to go forth to publish to mankind. But this general and indefinite assertion leaves abundant room for a few inquiries and remarks. And—

i. If the clearest revelation ever made of a future and immortal life—a revelation which, as compared with all preceding knowledge on the subject, is called a 'bringing to light,' implying previous dimness and even darkness,—was made by Christ; then is it not quite incompatible with the hearty belief of this to maintain, as many so fondly do, that the very first page of revelation plainly teaches the immortality of man?

ii. May not the general assertion, that Christ has placed the doctrine of immortality in a clear light, still leave room fairly for the question, Does this relate to all mankind, or to some only? that is, Is it absolutely or contingently true? For Christ also placed in clear noon-day light the fact that God forgives sins; while it is nevertheless true that he forgives only those that turn to him in true repentance. And in our text the apostle evidently intends the assertion as something exceedingly blissful; but immortal life is a glorious fact only for the saved. As the *Eclectic Review* says, mere existence is not necessarily a blessing.

iii. And certainly in the very verse before the text the apostle speaks not of all mankind, but of some only. Let us read it in its connection. 'Who hath saved us, and

\* See these collected in an Appendix to Archbishop Whately's *Essay on the Future State. Essays on the Peculiarities, &c.*

called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' So that if we read the two verses together, as we ought, our present text would really seem to have its most appropriate meaning in an assertion of the glorious abolition of death, and enjoyment of immortal life, for all that are 'saved and called with a holy calling, according to the grace given them in Christ Jesus before the world began.' On the meaning of which expressions, I appeal with considerable confidence to my evangelical brethren.

iv. It is quite the manner of inspired writers to assert in a general way, and without any restriction, blessings which the God and Father of all has exhibited for all, but which nevertheless will be really enjoyed only by some, because only some will avail themselves of the provision so amply made.

v. The immortal life here spoken of is connected with the gospel,—‘brought life and immortality to light *through the gospel*’;—so that it would seem to be one of the gospel blessings, and if so, to be enjoyed on gospel terms. But not laying much stress on this, it does seem important to observe—

vi. That if Christ hath more clearly than any-preceding teacher revealed, and that authoritatively, an immortal existence for man, we are bound reverently and submissively to sit at his feet, and learn of him the true words of God on the subject. So that we have to refer especially to our Lord's own discourses, since Paul says Christ hath set the subject of immortality in a clear light, and proclaimed it unambiguously.

Now I ask—Where? In what recorded discourses hath Christ made the doctrine of immortality plain, except in those very discourses of his wherein he promises Life, Eternal Life, never perishing, &c.? which, if we understand them literally, do indeed exhibit him as the authoritative revealer of life. But if all these passages are to be set aside, with the gratuitous assertion that the word life is not to be understood literally, then hath Christ nowhere set this mighty doctrine in the clear light which is affirmed.

But the popular exposition of those passages, in the gospels denies that they are to be understood literally, and proceeds on the hypothesis that man is so plainly immortal that it needed no teacher sent from God to reveal that! Where, I ask, has the Saviour authoritatively revealed the amazing fact of immortality, (which Paul says he has placed in a cloudless light) except in those very passages which are denied to teach the doctrine? A denial which our theological system alone renders necessary; for in all the discourses in which our Lord reveals *Life, Everlasting Life*, it is held out as the peculiar prerogative of those who believe on him, and to whom he announces himself as the bestower thereof.

From all which I feel compelled to refuse my assent to the interpretation which would make this verse teach a universal and unconditional immortality; and am compelled rather to think, not only that it contains nothing contradictory to the views suggested in this work, but that it harmonises therewith. And since it affirms Christ to be the authoritative teacher of the amazing fact of immortality, it remits us to himself to learn with reverent submissiveness the truth from his own sacred lips. So that we must inquire the doctrine of Christ as recorded by the evangelists.

But it would be neither fair to my readers, nor courteous to the best of my reviewers, to pass, without notice, the remarks of an opposite character which have been made on our present text. The Eclectic Reviewer says,—

“With Mr. Dobney, we do not hold the necessary immortality of the soul. With him also, we do not hold human reason competent to prove anything on this point. We hold, however, the actual immortality of the soul; and regard immortality as an attribute originally conferred on man, in congruity with his rank as a rational being, and with the designs of God respecting him.

“In order to adduce scriptural proof of this sentiment, we quote the declaration of the apostle, 2 Tim. i. 10, that Christ ‘hath vanquished death, and brought life and immortality to light;’ and we hold this quotation to be amply sufficient for our purpose. Christ is here said to have ‘brought to light,’ or to have fully and authoritatively revealed, ‘life and immortality,’—that is, the fact of a future and immortal existence for mankind. We say *for mankind*, meaning the whole human race, in opposition to the restriction held by the author, for the following reasons. First, because no distinction is made by the apostle, and his language must consequently be taken universally. To introduce a distinction of which he has given no intimation, would be totally unauthorized and unwarrantable.



Secondly, because the entire structure of the passage forbids restriction. The life which Christ is said to have brought to light, stands in direct contrast with death, and must be regarded as co-extensive with it. As death occurs to all, so the life and immortality belong to all. Besides, if the immortality be denied to any portion of mankind, so also must the life, for they obviously go together. It would do strange violence to this text to make it teach future existence for all, and immortal existence for a part. But, as Mr. Dobney admits, all are to live hereafter; consequently, all will be immortal. In truth, however, although the terms are two, the thing intended is one and indivisible. Life and immortality is only a greek idiom for immortal life. It is an immortal existence which Christ has revealed; and this immortal existence, is the only future existence for man of which anything is made known to us. It follows, therefore, that all existence in a future state will be immortal, and, that the idea of a limited existence for any part of mankind is not merely unsupported, but contradicted, by the language of the apostle."

I accept the rendering, 'immortal life.' My reviewer then lays down two principles, on which we are at issue. Let the reader judge.' His First is, that "Because no distinction is made by the apostle, his language must consequently be taken universally." Let us look at this.—

And it is obvious to remark, that of course this principle is of no use, unless it be sound and good. But how shall we ascertain this? Let us just throw it into the form of a general principle, which a student of scripture might take as an unimpeachable canon of interpretation. Well then it would be this,—Whenever a general declaration is made, and no distinction is at the time made by the writer, it must always be taken absolutely, and in its widest sense. But I am sure the reviewer himself would be one of the last men to lay down such a rule, and affirm that general terms are always to be understood universally, and that to no passage must we apply a restriction, unless the writer himself has made a distinction. For if he will affirm this, it will be easy to produce plenty of passages in which the use of universal terms, no distinction being drawn, must compel his assent to doctrines much more odious to orthodoxy than that maintained in these pages. Let us think a moment.

'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me,' said the Saviour; 'all men,'—here then I apply my reviewer's canon. 'No distinction is made by the [speaker] and his language must consequently be taken universally.' So then we have Christ's word for it, that all men will be drawn to

Christ. The apostle tells us that God 'will have all men to be saved,' and as he introduces no distinction, my reviewer, faithful to his own principle, must believe this to be absolutely true of every individual of the human race. So too he will understand in like manner of all the human and fallen angelic race, that God will reconcile them all to himself in Christ Jesus; for the apostle says that to the name of Jesus all shall bow, of celestials, terrestials, and sub-terrestials,—and all things are to be reconciled, and, in the Apocalypse, the whole creation is represented as echoing the song of praise which the elders and angels before the throne commence. But there are scores of such texts, in which there is no restriction made by the writers, and where therefore the universal sense must be conceded. Verily, the universalists will be thankful for this convenient philological axiom, and will proudly claim him for themselves. The first principle then cannot stand.

Let us look at the Second. It is, that the death abolished, and the immortal life revealed, stand in direct contrast with each other, and are therefore co-extensive. Very well, this is quite intelligible. The death abolished stands in contrast with the life revealed. But the life is ruled to be 'immortal existence,'—*then what was the antithetical death abolished?* By my reviewer's own law of antithesis, to which we shall refer on a subsequent page, the death which is the antithesis of the immortal life, must be therefore non-existence, or perishing. Yes, if life and immortality is a grecism for immortal life, in the sense of never-ending existence, then, according to his own rule respecting antithesis, the death abolished must have been the exact opposite to the life or existence revealed, and so must be death literal, or cessation of being. But if Christ 'abolished' this in any way, it must have been what men, without Christ's mediation, were exposed to.

But the reviewer says Christ "vanquished death," which as the opposite to "immortal life" must be taken literally. Then men must have been in danger of it. For as an apostle disdained to fight as one that beateth the air merely, so we may be quite sure that Christ does not "vanquish" airy nothings.

But he adds "It would do strange violence to this text to make it teach future existence for all, and immortal existence for a part." Well, but who attempts to do this?

The announcement, on one page of revelation, that Christ hath vanquished death (which is meant for a part of the blessing, I presume, in harmony with similar declarations) and revealed immortal existence, does not surely close the question against all further inquiry; does not preclude our asking, and obtaining from other passages an answer to the question, Has Christ vanquished death for all men? and is this immortality which he reveals the prerogative of all?

Still further, my reviewer, on another page of his calmly argumentative and forcible paper, lays it down that death, when threatened to the sinner, or mentioned as that from which Christ saves, means the entire aggregate of all the penal consequences of sin. Well, then, I fear the universalists will again claim him. For according to his axiom, since there is no restriction made by the apostle, the terms must be understood universally. And so on his own principles—first, as to the meaning of death from which Christ saves, and then as to the unrestricted character of the text—all the penal consequences of sin for all mankind are abolished by Christ. And as Life, Eternal Life, (and immortal life is an exact synonym) according to him, denotes the entire aggregate of good conferred by Christ, then too, remembering his law about no restriction, seeing all men have this immortal life, all men are to be happy.

But as we shall probably have to refer to this subject again, and as I trust that what has been said will be considered to meet the objection of the reviewer, it is not necessary to make my reply more copious. It will however be more complete, if the reader will kindly refer again at this point to the suggestions already submitted on this passage. (pp. 162–165.)

And now, since we are free to pursue our proposed course, I respectfully solicit attention to the following

### § PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

i. It will be at once recognised as a universally acknowledged canon of interpretation, that the literal sense is to be preferred in all cases in which it does not involve a contradiction of other parts of scripture, or an absurdity, or anything derogatory to the character of the Divine Being.\*

\* “I hold it for a most infallible rule in exposition of sacred scripture that, when a literal construction will stand, the farthest from

Now, to my mind, the literal interpretation of such passages as exhibit ‘*life*’ promised to the righteous, and ‘*death*,’ ‘*destruction*,’ threatened to the wicked, is not fairly open to any charge of involving the contradictory or absurd. And, more than this, it perfectly harmonises with everything the scriptures contain on this momentous subject. For,—

ii. *It is not an impossible thing* that human beings, who,—having wilfully and perseveringly violated that law which is holy and just and good, and on which the moral order of the universe depends, and without harmony wherewith they never can themselves be happy,—persist in ungratefully and impiously rejecting the great salvation, which God in his infinite compassion has provided, should perish, utterly cease to be. No one it is presumed will affirm in the present day, whatever logomachy on the point was popular in the last generation, that this is an impossibility, that He who made us cannot remand into that blank nothingness from which by his fiat alone we sprang. Surely none will deny that

“He can create, and He destroy.”

iii. As it is not impossible, so *neither is it, of itself, an absurd thing*, to suppose that creatures, who contradict the great design of their creation,—who do not choose the fear of the Lord, who will not be persuaded to embrace eternal happiness (and the all-wise Creator alone knows precisely in what way the minds he hath made and endowed can best attain to true and perfect bliss) but will persist in setting at nought their benevolent Maker and Governor,—should therefore at some period lose that existence, which by their own folly and wickedness cannot be otherwise than wretched. We cannot conceive, I say, that there is anything in

the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changes the meaning of words, as alchemy doth or would do the substance of metals, making of anything what it pleases, and bringing in the end all truth to nothing.”—*Hooker, Eccles. Pol.*

In agreement wherewith the Eclectic Reviewer also says, “We admit at once that the terms in question [eternal life and everlasting destruction, &c.] like all other terms in human language, are to be understood in their literal sense, unless cause can be shown for otherwise interpreting them. We admit, consequently, that the burden of proof lies with ourselves.”



this notion, considered in itself, so shocking to our understanding, so repugnant to our common sense, that it must instantly be discarded as an absurdity. If the only two theories now under discussion be considered together, there is no one who can pronounce the destruction of the incorrigible to be absurd, as compared with the doctrine of their endless existence in torment. On the contrary, if the question between the two theories were to be decided by the human understanding, it is submitted that no one would see any absurdity in the idea of their ceasing to be, whose existence could never be a blessing to themselves, nor a source of happiness to others.

iv. *It is not so improbable* a thing—that no calmly thoughtful person could entertain it. On the contrary, were scripture silent on this one subject of the destiny of the wicked, (revelation else standing as it does, and revealing the mighty fact that *God is love*) and were we left to discover for ourselves, by the light which shone on the character of God, and on other parts of his designs, what would in all probability be the doom of those that obstinately refused to be made happy in God's own way,—which is the only way,—it would not, I think, seem less probable that such unhappy beings should perish altogether and utterly, than that they should be, by the divine conservation, kept alive, not only for inconceivable myriads of ages, but for ever and ever, in exquisite and unmitigable torment. This would scarcely, I think, appear a probable notion to a human mind that, striving to become more and more like our Father in heaven, looked abroad on the whole sensitive and especially the intelligent creation with an eye beaming with benevolence.

I know indeed that this strain of remark is quite capable of abuse, and that some sort of answer may without much difficulty be given. I therefore beg to be distinctly understood. The very utmost that I intend by this paragraph is, that the notion of ceasing to be is not of itself, nor *a priori*, an improbable one *as compared* with the dogma (still supposing no positive revelation on the subject) that God will by his own ceaseless preserving power—for 'by him all things consist'—keep the wicked alive for ever and ever, in order to their never-ending torment.

I think I might even go farther, and affirm that their entire destruction would (if we were left as supposed) ap-

pear inexpressibly more probable, than their preservation on purpose to be tormented through infinite ages. There would be the character of God to guide us to such a conclusion; and the fact that the saved, being confirmed in holiness, could not eternally need so awful a spectacle as a perpetually visible warning to themselves against sin. For the memory of the past on earth—their former degradation, and rescue by the free grace of God through Jesus Christ—the unspeakably wonderful plan of salvation—the never-to-be-forgotten scenes of the final judgment, and the going away with weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth of the ungodly into the place assigned for them, there to undergo the second death,—with the deep consciousness of the misery of sin—their indebtedness to God—and with their ever growing enjoyment of heavenly happiness—will suffice, to say nothing of the watchful care of Him who promises that they shall never perish, to preserve them when once saved, from ever again involving themselves in transgression and consequent misery. While no end would be answered in the experience of the lost themselves, by their being for ever sustained by Almighty power, in order to be for ever the objects on whom divine wrath might exert itself.

So then we are shut up to scripture. And I thank God with all my heart that we are not left to the uncertainty which, on such a subject, must else be inevitable if we had only unaided reason to guide us, but that we have a most sure word of prophecy, to which we shall do well to give most diligent and reverential and grateful heed. Only it may be suggested that, for a doctrine so unutterably appalling in itself—horrible beyond the conception of the mightiest angels—yea, of all except God himself—we ought to have the plainest, the most unequivocal testimony.

v. As the literal interpretation of those texts which threaten a second death, destruction, &c. to the incorrigible sinner, does not involve an impossibility, nor an absurdity, nor, *a priori*, anything improbable, so also it is *not contradictory to any other statements of scripture*. And it is submitted that so harmonious are the passages which treat of the ultimate doom of the impenitent, that ‘the common people,’ who are to the full as deeply interested in the subject as the more ingenious, would be likely to construe them all literally, unless taught differently. In which case, the

general tenor of scripture threatenings would naturally convey to them the idea of a 'miserable destruction,' and not of unceasing torment. For they would find the disobedient to the gospel threatened with 'not seeing life,' with 'perishing,' with being 'consumed as stubble,' destroyed like chaff by fire, with a 'second death,' and the like. While even such persons would be quite competent to expound Matt. xxv. 46, by 2. Thess. i. 9; and to observe that when it is said, Rev. xx. 10, 'they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever,' it is not human beings that are spoken of; and that when xiv. 11, a similar assertion is made, it is not of the future state at all that the angel herald speaks, but that he is there announcing the woes forthwith coming here on earth, on those who worshipped the image, &c. (which passages we shall consider hereafter.)

If then the literal sense involves nothing contradictory, nothing impossible, nothing absurd, nor *a priori*, improbable even, but the contrary; then, according to one of the most obvious and commonly received canons of interpretation already alluded to, not only would there be no presumption against the literal rendering, but the presumption would be altogether in favor of it.

Here, then, we may close these preliminary observations. And now our inquiry relates to—

#### § THE USE OF THE WORD 'LIFE,' 'ETERNAL LIFE,' &c., IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The question we have to consider is,—not whether this word is sometimes employed in a secondary and figurative sense, to denote the highest and all possible good,—but whether, when it is one of the objects held out to be sought after, and is matter of promise by God through Christ, it has, or includes, the idea of continued and never-ending existence. The holders of the popular doctrine, proceeding on the assumption that all men have eternal life, in the literal sense, must of course deny altogether that the idea of existence is even included in the terms 'life,' 'everlasting life,' and the like. For seeing, according to the common notion, that the wicked have everlasting life (taking the phrase literally) as well as the righteous, when this is promised to the followers of Christ, as something peculiar to them and unutterably glorious, they must perforce affirm that the

phrase is used metaphorically, and only so. Will the serious reader do me the favor to consider the following observations.

I. That Existence, and existence only (or at all events chiefly) is meant by such words *in some passages* cannot be disputed.

For instance,—When Christ appearing to John in Patmos says, Rev. i. 18, ‘I am he that *liveth*, and was dead; and behold I am *alive* for evermore;’ no one will affirm that the glorified Saviour, although of course unutterably happy, meant at all to convey the idea of happiness by the assertion of living, and being alive for evermore; but the idea of an existence gloriously exempt for ever from all liability to a second death. So Professor Stuart rightly expounds.—“I was indeed subject to the power of death, yet only for a little time, for behold! I live for ever and ever; I have risen to a life which can never be interrupted, never cease.” *Stuart in loc.*

And so when in Rev. iv. 9, 10, “The living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, *who liveth for ever and ever*; and the four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship *him that liveth for ever and ever*,”—no one will wish to do away with the literal sense of the phrase employed; which appears to be used here something like the ‘I AM’ of the old testament, to set forth the idea of infinite and independent existence. The Jews were accustomed to speak of God as emphatically “the living God,” in distinction from the heathen deities which were either the objects of nature, the creations of their fancy, or the work of their own hands; and the formula was common, ‘As the Lord liveth,’ &c.

So we are assured, Heb. vii. 25, that Christ ‘is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, *seeing he ever liveth*, to make intercession for them,’ where, without dispute, the phrase is used literally. As it is in v. 16 of the same chapter, where Christ is said to be a priest ‘not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an *endless life*.’ But as any concordance will give many similar passages, the reader needs not be detained on this first remark, except to observe,—

That Christ himself, in the days of his flesh, as well as subsequently, used the word in that literal sense which it



would naturally convey. Thus, for example, when he said, John v. 26, 'As the Father *hath life* in himself, so hath he given to the Son to *have life* in himself.' No one will affirm happiness to be here intended, although God is the happy God, and Christ partakes of his felicity, or deny that the word is used in the strictest literalness. But to advance a step, it may be observed;—

II. That the word is *sometimes* to be understood literally when men are spoken of; which will not be denied by the keenest disputant.

Thus the apostle, in his famous discourse on Mars' hill, speaking of God, says 'He giveth to all *life* and breath and all things. . . . In him we *live* and move and have our being.' And Christ affirmed in a passage we have already examined, 'God is not the God of the dead but of the *living*.' Where by 'dead' we must necessarily understand the idea that our Lord was then controverting with the Sadducees, who held that death was the utter end of man, and that all who had died were clean perished out of existence, and that for ever. Christ proved that the notion as they held it was false, for that God, after the decease of the patriarchs, had styled himself their God. Here the word 'living' then is necessarily used by our Lord in its natural sense; and, in this passage, he who brought life and immortality to light teaches that there is an existence after the body has yielded to decay. God is not the God of the utterly non-existent and perished. Death and life are here used for existence and non-existence. But as a concordance will give a great number of texts in which the literal is the only possible sense, the reader is referred thereto, that we may avoid filling pages with quotations, and may come still nearer to the very point of the present argument. And it may be remarked,—

III. That the word is sometimes to be understood literally, when employed in a declaration of the benefits bestowed by Christ on those who believe in him.

As for example—John vi. 57—58, when Christ says 'As the *living* Father hath sent me, and *I live* by the Father; so he that eateth me, even *he shall live* by me. This is that bread which, &c. He that eateth of this bread *shall live for ever*. No expositor would expound it thus,—'As the *happy* Father hath sent me, and I am *happy* by the Father, so he that eateth me shall be *happy* by me,'

—although a true sentiment. For the question all through the discourse was not concerning happiness, but about bread that could preserve from death, which the bread furnished through Moses in the wilderness could not do. And in the verse here quoted, since no one would wish to set aside the literal sense of the word in the first and second clauses, so neither can it be rejected in the last; especially if regard be had to the scope of the entire discourse.

So in John xiv. 19, '*Because I live, ye shall live also.*' Where again no one will venture seriously to expound it, though the sentiment is true, '*Because I am happy, ye shall be happy also.*' And to revert to a passage already quoted, John v. 26, when Christ says, '*For as the Father hath life in himself, so also hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;*' in this connection it is, when obviously using the word in its literal sense, that he says in the verse immediately preceding, '*Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live: For, as the Father hath life in himself,*' &c.

And the statement of our Lord to Martha, weeping bitter tears of sorrow, may perhaps be fairly adduced.—John xi. 23. '*Thy brother shall rise again.*' But at that moment of intense grief, when her recent loss was so vividly realised, the prospect of the general resurrection, to her apprehension so indefinitely remote, did not very greatly pacify her mind; and her gracious Lord, intending to gratify her wish, scarcely half-formed and not to be intimated, begins to remind her that the general resurrection was to be accomplished by himself, who could therefore at any moment quicken whom he would. It is to his words, at this point of time, that the reader's attention is invited.

When he says, 25v. '*I am the resurrection,*' we of course understand him, by the use of a common figure of speech, to mean that he would be the efficient cause, the author of the resurrection,—he would accomplish it. Now the word '*resurrection*' is universally and of necessity here taken in its literal sense. So therefore must the next word be,—'*life.*' '*I am the resurrection and the life.*' Strange indeed would it be to interpret the one word literally and the next word figuratively. In whatever way Christ is '*The resurrection,*' in that same way must he also be '*The life.*' And it would indeed be something very like wrest-

ing the scriptures, to serve a purpose, to understand the word resurrection literally, and make the very next word, 'life,' a metaphor. Our Lord teaches that he would raise the dead, and make them live again; and that if any who had believed were already dead, he would nevertheless raise them to life; while of the then living who believed and who must of course taste of death, it was a glorious fact that their death, not being final, was not strictly speaking deserving of the name, for that they should live for ever. This seems to me the general sentiment of these verses; which are adduced here in support of the idea that life, literally understood, is made the matter of distinct declaration and promise by Christ. For in this passage it will not do to spiritualise the words, 'life,' and 'he shall live,' 'dead,' and 'shall not die for ever,' [οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] seeing there was no question mooted about *spiritual* death and life, nor about misery and happiness. And to engraft these ideas would be not only gratuitous, but would spoil the beautiful propriety of our Lord's discourse on that sorrowful occasion, and make it altogether irrelevant.

And if the life here promised could possibly mean happiness, then, according to the principles laid down by the Eclectic Reviewer, and already referred to, since Christ is the resurrection to all men, and the assertion, 'I am the resurrection and the life,' is made generally and without discriminating any, all who are raised from the dead by Christ will also be made eternally happy by him! a conclusion which none will allow to be deduced from this text. I submit, then, that we must understand the terms in this passage literally.

But here it will doubtless occur to the reader, that if the spiritualising process would make against the popular notion, by representing happiness (life, taken metaphorically) as co-extensive with the resurrection,—so the literal rendering of the passage makes as completely against my view, by exhibiting continued existence after resurrection as equally the portion of all. It is but fair that I should acknowledge whatever force lies in this rejoinder: but it is I believe, apparent, and not real. Let it be remembered then that in the last of the above two suggestions, I am merely using the principle of an opponent to convince him that on his own principle he must consent to understand the word

‘life’ literally. For the understanding it figuratively, for happiness, and then applying to the declaration his canon, that when no discrimination is affirmed the sense is universal, would make him a universalist. I, however, deny this principle, so that the argument stands good against an opponent, but not against myself. And so I come back to this;—Christ is the author of the resurrection, and the giver of the life to be then enjoyed. This is a general assertion; leaving us yet to ascertain who are to be raised—who are to be endowed with life.

We are elsewhere assured that all the dead, both small and great, shall be raised, but that they only shall receive everlasting life, who are saved by Christ; ‘I give unto *my sheep eternal life*, and *they* shall never perish.’ ‘All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto *the resurrection of life*; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation.’ Let this passage be accepted as expository of the former one, showing who are to receive the crown of life when they are raised from the dead; for as in that, life must be understood literally, so in this. And then, by my reviewer’s law of antithesis, taking life literally, we understand the resurrection to condemnation to be a retributive resurrection to a second death.

The reader will be so kind as to remember, that all I am asserting under this third head is, that sometimes, at all events, life is to be literally understood, when it is the subject matter of declaration and promise by Christ, and I have adduced as one proof the passage in John xi. 25.

Another text already quoted may be referred to, merely with this one object in view, namely, 2. Tim. i. 10, ‘Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.’ As suggested before, I cheerfully accept the ordinary interpretation, that life and immortality are put by hendiadys for immortal life, and so content myself with pointing out the fact, that this is another passage in which life, as made the matter of declaration by Christ, must be understood literally. Which leads us to make another remark, although already somewhat anticipated, namely—

IV. That a belief of this assertion of the apostle’s—that it is Christ especially who hath set in a clear light the mighty doctrine of immortal life—would seem to shut us up to a literal rendering of those passages which contain



such phrases as 'life,' 'eternal life,' 'not perishing,' and the like, as used by our Lord.

For the case stand thus. An inspired apostle declares that Christ hath brought this subject of a future and endless life to light. Then it is but reasonable to expect to find in Christ's discourses this subject of infinite existence treated of more distinctly than in any preceding revelation. And the points on which a mind yearning for immortality requires authoritative instruction, seem to be these. First—Is there immortality for man at all? And if so,—Is it the prerogative of all man indiscriminately, or only of some? And if of some,—Of whom, and how obtainable?

Let it be borne in mind that the clearest light ever shed on this momentous topic is that cast by Christ. We come then to him who is expressly designated 'THE LIFE,' and of whom John says, i. 4, 'In him was life; and the life was the light of men,' which assertion he seems to make as still further illustrative of the previous statement that the Word had created all things; the Logos was possessed of, and was the source of, all living energies.

But before we proceed to inquire at the hands of Christ himself, the true doctrine of immortality, it will be well to consider rather more distinctly the very significant assurance, on the opening of John's gospel, that 'IN HIM WAS LIFE;' seeing that it is of life we are inquiring. But as an independent exposition would doubtless be every way preferable, I shall introduce a part of Tittmann's commentary on the phrase.

"The word ζωή, like the Hebrew חַיִּים, when used of God to express some divine attribute, as in this passage, evidently denotes the power to possess and impart life, the principle of life, life-giving power, creative power. Wherefore, as God lives for ever, and as he is the author of life, he is called 'the living God,' in opposition to idols, which have neither life nor power. 1. Sam. xvii. 26–36. Ps. xlii. 3; lxxxiv. 3. 1. Thess. i. 9. 1. Tim. vi. 17. In the last passage, this explanation is added: 'Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.' For the same reason he is called 'the fountain of life,' Ps. xxxvi. 10, and the God of life, Ps. xlii. 9; and he is said 'to make alive,' 'to quicken,' Deut. xxxii. 39. 1. Tim. vi. 13; and we are said 'to live in God,' as our life and activity are his gifts. The connection requires this meaning to be assigned to the word

‘life,’ in this passage; for, in the preceding verse, John had spoken of the creation, and he now adds these words, ‘in him was life,’ in order to show the reason wherefore he ascribed, and could ascribe, so astonishing a work to the Son of God,—namely, because he is able to impart life to things which were not.

“The same thing is evident from the parallel passage, chapter v. 26 verse, which must be compared with this, in order to a clear perception of the force and meaning of the word ζῶῃ. For John could not ascribe life to the Son of God, in a sense different from that in which he himself claimed it. But in the passage referred to, he says, that he ‘hath life in himself,’ which must be understood of the power to possess life, and impart it to others. The preceding and subsequent context require this interpretation. For in the preceding verses, he ascribes to himself the power to raise up and quicken the dead; and in the following verse, the power to judge, and to reward and punish them,—both which require almighty power. Again, the example of the Father, to whom our Saviour appeals, puts this interpretation beyond all doubt. ‘As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.’ When ‘life’ is ascribed to the Father, it manifestly denotes life-giving power. It cannot mean life simply; for the question is not, does God live, but, does he impart life? but the phrase, ‘hath life in himself,’ must signify, hath power to impart life to others. The meaning may be expressed thus: God is not like men, who ‘live, and move, and have their being’ in God: he has life in and of himself, he gives life to all, and all who have life have it from him. The Son has life in the same way as the Father: he has it in himself as the Father, and he can impart it to others as the Father. From all this it is evident, that the word ‘life,’ in the passage under consideration, bears the meaning which I have assigned to it; and the words, ‘in him was life,’ have reference to all created things, or to the whole universe; those which follow, ‘and the life was the light of men,’ refer to the human race. The meaning may be expressed thus: he has life-giving power, but he puts it forth chiefly for the happiness of men.” \* \* \*

“In this passage, then, John exhibits the divine dignity of the promised Saviour in two ways. In the words ‘in

him was life,' he ascribes to him creative power; an attribute peculiar to the one living and true God. Again, in the words 'and the life was the light of men,' he ascribes to him power to communicate happiness to men, and represents him as the only author of human life and felicity; and that for two reasons; partly because he created men, but principally because he redeems them from death and misery, and brings them, as it were, into a new life; a life of faith, purity, and spiritual joy, in this world, and of immortal happiness and glory in the world to come."

To him then, I say, made flesh and tabernacling amongst us, through whom God made the world, ('For by him,' &c. Col. i. 16-17) and who is to all creatures the fountain of life, whence all their living energies are derived, we reverently approach, with the sentiment of Peter on our lips,— 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.' And sitting disciple-like at the feet of the great Master, we are ready to treasure up in our hearts the gracious words that proceed out of his mouth. Our question is touching life—and life interminably prolonged—drawn out to all eternity. Assuredly he could not use words plainer or more relevant, than those employed in the very question we anxiously propose. It is of life and of eternity, we ask,—it is of life and of eternity, he speaks. And in these self-same and plain terms he tells us of the very thing we inquire about; that is, he speaks to us of 'Life,' 'Eternal Life,' 'Everlasting life,' 'never perishing,' &c.; in a word, of immortality.

So far then this might be satisfactory. But he goes on to predicate this eternal life of *a class only*, speaking of it as the gift of God through Christ, and connected with believing on him; affirming that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.' 'I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish.' 'That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' While he affirms of all others, that they shall not see life,—that they shall be burned up like chaff,—be destroyed both body and soul,—lose their life,—perish.

Since, then, on this most momentous of all subjects, we are to a great extent shut up to Christ; and then seeing that the very best terms to denote the idea of never-ending existence are employed by Christ, namely, such as everlasting life, &c., I feel compelled to ground my own hope

of immortality on his mercifully plain direction; and so to follow implicitly his instructions, laying hold on eternal life by cleaving to him with full purpose of heart, and expecting it as the glorious gift of him whose title is—'The Prince of Life, and who is emphatically styled—'Christ our Life.'

For since we are referred to Christ for the clearest light on this subject, and must therefore of necessity find much in his discourses about immortal life, I ask again,—Where does Christ place in clear light this doctrine of immortal life, if not in those very passages where he treats of it in these and similar terms.

But for various reasons, and many of them praiseworthy, religious writers have been anxious to demonstrate that immortal life was placed in a very satisfactory light long before Christ; and they scarcely derive any portion of their proof of such an amazing fact as infinite existence from the great teacher, who, according to an inspired apostle, emphatically brought it to light. But deriving their belief independently, and for the most part affirming that a universal immortality is plainly discoverable on even the very first page of revelation, they are driven to the necessity of making the chief revealer of the doctrine not to teach anything on the subject, or next to nothing; as indeed there was, according to the popular notion, but little need he should!

But, assuredly, if Christ be emphatically the teacher of the doctrine of immortality, which by apostolic authority we are bound to consider him, he has taught us to whom it pertains. And then as certainly he has taught, as plainly as words would allow, that this is the gift of God, through himself, to them that believe. So that by how much we lay a fair philological and historical stress on the apostle's assertion, 2. Tim. i. 10, by so much do we seem compelled to understand our Lord literally, when he promises eternal life to a class.

Here I may be allowed to introduce a paragraph from Abp. Whately on the subject.

"On the whole then, the Scriptures do not I think afford us any ground for expecting that those who shall be condemned at the last day as having wilfully rejected or rebelled against their Lord, will be finally delivered; that their doom and that of the evil Angels, will ever be reversed.

"What that doom will be,—whether the terms in which



it is commonly spoken of in Scripture,—‘death,’ ‘destruction,’ ‘perishing,’ &c., are to be understood figuratively, as denoting immortal life in a state of misery, or more literally, as denoting a final extinction of existence,—this is quite a different question. It is certain that the words, ‘life,’ ‘eternal life,’ ‘immortality,’ &c., are always applied to the condition of those, and of those only, who shall at the last day be approved as ‘good and faithful servants, who are to enter into the joy of their Lord.’

“‘Life’ as applied to their condition, is usually understood to mean ‘happy life.’ And that theirs will *be* a happy life, we are indeed plainly taught; but I do not think we are anywhere taught that the word ‘life’ does of itself necessarily imply happiness. If so indeed, it would be a mere tautology to speak of a ‘happy life;’ and a contradiction, to speak of a ‘miserable life;’ which we know is not the case, according to the usage of any language. In all Ages and Countries, ‘life,’ and the words answering to it in other languages, have always been applied in ordinary discourse, to a wretched life, no less properly than to a happy one. Life, therefore, in the received sense of the word, would apply equally to the condition of the blest and of the condemned, supposing these last to be destined to continue for ever living in a state of misery. And yet, to *their* condition the words ‘life’ and ‘immortality’ never are applied in Scripture. If therefore we suppose the hearers of Jesus and his Apostles to have understood, as nearly as possible in the ordinary sense, the words employed, they must naturally have conceived them to mean (if they were taught nothing to the contrary) that the condemned were really and literally to be ‘destroyed,’ and cease to exist; not, that they were to exist for ever in a state of wretchedness. For they are never spoken of as being kept alive, but as *forfeiting* life: as for instance, ‘Ye will not come unto me that ye may *have life*:’—‘He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath *not* life.’ And again, ‘perdition,’ ‘death,’ ‘destruction,’ are employed in numerous passages to express the doom of the condemned. All which expressions would, as I have said, be naturally taken in their usual and obvious sense, if nothing were taught to the contrary.”\*

\* Scripture Revelations concerning a Future State, &c., p. 225.

Here however we are called upon to meet one of the chief objections urged against the doctrine we suggest.

It is alleged that, since the righteous do not merely exist, but are made perfectly happy through Christ, and since eternal life is emphatically the phrase by which the blessedness he communicates is set forth, it must necessarily be understood figuratively to mean happiness, and stands for the entire sum of the blessings Christ bestows. And it is asked, since eternal life is so emphatically promised as the magnificent result of a Saviour's obedience unto death, how can we believe that nothing more is meant than mere existence, drawn out though it be to all eternity. This objection has been urged as powerfully as it can be in the *Eclectic Review*, and it will be but right therefore to state it in the writer's own words.

"Taking, in the first instance, the passages which express the future state of the righteous by the term life, the question before us is, whether, in them this term can be satisfactorily understood as meaning existence merely. Now, when we consider that what is thus spoken of under the term life is the subject of divine promise, 'the gift of God' through Christ Jesus, the result of his death, and the reward of faith in his name, it is to us, we confess, in the highest degree unsatisfactory to understand the term used of existence merely. Some inestimable blessing must be here intended. Mere existence, however, is not necessarily, or in itself, a blessing. Whether it be a benefit at all, or the contrary, depends wholly on the kind of existence, and the manner in which it is employed. It may be conceived of either as void of good, or as full of misery. Mr. Dobney holds it to be conferred for a very long period upon the wicked. We conclude, therefore, that the connexion demands some other meaning for the word 'life' in these passages than existence merely, and as happiness is an idea very much to the point, and consistent with the usage of the term, we, in agreement with the great majority of scriptural commentators, adopt this as the meaning of it." *Eclectic Review for August, 1845*, p. 155.

Every one perceives that the entire force of the question, which the reviewer has proposed in order to answer, lies in the adverb wherewith he ends the sentence. Take away his "merely," and what follows is nothing to the point, for he is arguing against the idea of "mere existence" being all that Christ has gained for us, &c. All of which as no one has affirmed so no one will contend for. And with all respect it is submitted that the question is not, as he ingeniously states it,—whether *mere existence be all* that Christ bestows, but whether or not Christ does bestow that

immortality which he fills with unspeakable happiness? For the reviewer himself admits on the following page that there are other terms in scripture which convey the notion of holiness, communion with God, &c. I affirm, as strongly as words will serve, that the saved shall receive through Christ, to whose gracious mediation they owe every blessing both in this world and in that which is to come, every form and degree of good of which they are capable, and not bare "existence merely."

The reviewer then supposes two things which may be alleged in bar of his conclusion; which conclusion however we submit to be altogether useless to him, *ab initio*, because he has, as we conceive, though of course unintentionally, somewhat mis-stated the question. But we quote again.—

"It may be said further, that, although the term 'life,' as descriptive of the future state of the righteous, no doubt means happiness, it means existence also, and conveys the compound idea of a happy existence. This, however, is saying that a word has two meanings in one and the same case, and that it is at the same instant to be understood both literally and metaphorically; which seems to us to be altogether inadmissible. We can understand how it may be necessary to interpret a word literally in one case, and metaphorically in another; but what warrant there can be for interpreting a word in both ways at once is to us unintelligible. It is not until we have ascertained that the literal meaning of a term will not serve, that we have any liberty to annex a metaphorical meaning to it at all; and how, after this, can the literal meaning be retained? The term life cannot justly be made to convey the compound idea, happy existence. It may mean either existence, or happiness, as taken either literally or figuratively; but the taking it to mean one determines that it does not in that case mean the other. Besides, if life means happy existence, death may mean miserable existence; a supposition entirely fatal to Mr. Dobney's argument.

"We return to the conclusion, therefore, that the term life, when used descriptively of the future state of the righteous, does not denote existence, but happiness exclusively.

"We do not know that it is necessary to strengthen this conclusion by collateral evidence. It may be observed, however, that the future state of the righteous is represented in scripture, not exclusively by the term life, but by other terms also. These terms, whether more brief or more extended, are uniformly descriptive of happiness in various forms—of holiness, of communion with God, of the presence of Christ, of honor, of freedom from suffering, and other kindred ideas. These are evidently the counterpart of the word life; the several elements which go to make up that state of happiness, most felicitously and emphatically expressed by the single term *life*. Nowhere among these diversified descriptions do phrases occur, tending to show that existence itself is one of these elements;

yet, if this were a part of 'the gift of God,' so important a particular might be expected to appear, if not always, yet on some other occasion than in the use of the term life, which is so obviously generic, and inclusive of the whole."

I shall content myself with offering a remark or two on the chief points of the foregoing extract, seeing that whatever force there may be in the entire argument I am conducting lies against the doctrine which the reviewer maintains. But since he alleges that if existence itself 'were a part of the gift of God,'—and it seems strange to question this!—so important a particular might be expected to appear on some other occasion than in the use of the term life, I inquire what better terms could have been selected? Remembering the Egyptian darkness that covered the whole earth on the subject of a future life and immortality, would it not be every way best for that great Teacher, who came to be a light unto the Gentiles, and whom the common people heard so gladly, to use great plainness of speech? How was life to be better designated than by the self-same word itself, with the addition of the epithets eternal, everlasting, abiding for ever; and then the expression of the same thought negatively,—shall not die for ever, shall never perish, shall not die any more?

Christ says 'As the *living Father hath life* in himself, so hath he given to the Son to *have life* in himself,'—'the Son *quickeneth* whom he will,'—'giveth life to whom he will'—'for the second Adam is a *life-giving* spirit;'—'because *I live ye shall live* also,' &c. If these terms are to be set aside as not teaching our indebtedness for infinite existence (and let any one try to realise it) to Christ, I can scarcely conceive how the fact was to have been taught; except indeed the scriptures had been constructed on quite a different plan from that which infinite wisdom has adopted, and by which truth is not so much formally stated, as in creeds and catechisms and articles, as it is incidentally communicated. And if these terms are to be denied as teaching that continued existence itself is obtained for us by Christ (which existence he also fills with ever increasing happiness) then the scriptures would almost seem unfit for the common people; for that this is the obvious sense I respectfully submit.

And as to 'Life' being generic and inclusive. Suppose it be conceded, what philological, or even dogmatical, ob-



jection would then lie against understanding it thus? 'Life' is a term generic and inclusive, and means—(1.) Existence, literally; conscious being, without which of course no other good can be possible: and—(2.) Happiness, because generally life is esteemed of the highest importance; "skin after skin (one article of property after another) yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." So that the most valuable endowment of man, without which he could have no other, is well chosen as the term by which to set forth the whole sum of happiness, and thus the word 'Life' may mean continued existence made happy. For, in further reply it is submitted,—

i. That no argument whatever can set aside the fact already shown, that there are passages in which the term must necessarily be understood literally, when life—eternal life is the subject matter of declaration and promise.

ii. And if such passages are not allowed to teach the grand doctrine of immortality, which Christ placed in the clearest light, there are none that do teach it; and the apostolic assertion, 2. Tim. i. 10 is eviscerated.

iii. The same objection would apply equally to passages in which *God* is said to live for ever and ever; and it would be as reasonable to ask in a tone of triumph, "What! are we to believe that mere existence is predicated of God?—Surely God is infinitely happy; and therefore, when an angel or an apostle affirms barely of him that he liveth for ever and ever, this formula must convey the idea of infinite felicity." Every one would perceive this sort of argument to be of little value, and the reply would be ready;—We know from other sources that God over all is happy for evermore, and are content to find in this one phrase the one idea, which is indeed magnificent beyond conception, of infinite existence.

So we know from other passages that they who receive the gift of life shall be made gloriously perfect in all respects, in knowledge, purity, bliss; that they shall see God, shall reign with Christ, &c. &c. Why not be content, then, to derive the amazing fact of never-ending existence from those texts that teach it; and the ineffably glorious characteristics of that everlasting life, from the texts which more distinctly exhibit them?

iv. Besides, even if it be conceded that the phrase eternal life is, in scripture terminology, the technical term for the

whole aggregate of the blessings bestowed on the righteous, why should the idea of immortality, which after all must lie at the basis, be excluded as one of the blessings conferred? If the phrase includes many things, why may not infinite existence be one of the many? And would there not be a beautiful propriety in selecting that endowment which is indispensable to all others, and in itself the mightiest of all, as precisely that which, because of its grandeur, shall be chiefly adopted as representative of the whole?

But against this it is laid down, as though it were an indisputable axiom, that the word must have one or two significations, and cannot have both: it must be interpreted either literally, and so mean existence only; or figuratively, in which case the literal sense is altogether excluded.

I reply, (1.) by denying the soundness of the principle, which almost seems made for the occasion. For if there were a single passage in which a word was used both literally and figuratively,—the physical and primary sense being combined with the spiritual,—the objection is met. Now I submit that there are many passages in the new testament where the same word is evidently inclusive of both significations. I may here quote Professor Tholuck on John i. 4, in which text he considers both senses, the physical and spiritual, to be combined in the word Life.—

“This φῶς [light] was imparted to man, at the creation, by the communication of the ζωῇ, *life*. It may here be asked whether ζωῇ means all life, and consequently the natural also, or whether it means exclusively the life in God, spiritual life, ἡ ὁρῶς ζωῇ, 1. Tim. vi. 19. The first assumption is found, for example, beautifully expressed by Theod. Mops.: ‘He maketh the energy of life to gush forth, so that he may not live alone but that he may impart life to others also. But the power which is in him is not only able to give life, but also to fill the minds of men with knowledge.’ The source of all living energies actually dwells in the Logos, and their highest manifestation is the life of the spirit in man. It is therefore not necessary to attach to ζωῇ the idea of spiritual life exclusively, especially as in the first instance ζωῇ is without the article; though it must be added that a reference to the spiritual life prevails.”

And on John v. 21—29 he says, “An unprejudiced examination will show that in this passage Christ speaks of

his agency both in the spiritual and bodily resurrection." That is to say, that when Christ speaks of raising the dead, he uses the same phrase in two senses—the literal and figurative. Further, this eminent expositor adds,—

"In this discourse *the spiritual and physical agencies* of Christ are probably combined. According to the biblical representation, (and also according to v. 24, and iv. 14,—vi. 58,) the resurrection of believers and their glorification which will then commence, is only the last step, the final culminating point of the operations of that divine and living principle which they have received within themselves, and which, proceeding from the inward to the outward, transforms and glorifies their entire being. See Rom. viii. 10–11, and the author's Comm. on the passage, together with the extracts from the Fathers of the Church. Christ, then may at first very properly *combine that twofold agency*, and afterwards divide it, and speak first of the spiritual one, and afterwards of the physical one, as the result of the former. In Matt. xi. 5, also the νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, 'the dead are raised up,' and the πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται, 'the poor have the gospel preached to them,' may refer at the same time to *both spiritual and physical agencies* and effects.—Ζωοποιεῖν is probably different here from ἐγείρειν, Eph. ii. 5–6, and denotes the positive communication of life to those who have been made free from death."

And (2.) by reminding the reader, that the very holders of the popular notion falsify this same principle, when they treat of the death threatened to the wicked; which they understand to include both the literal and metaphorical sense, making it to mean, first, natural death, second, spiritual death, (a state of sin) and third, eternal death (or everlasting misery.) Here, though they do not understand by it non-existence, they do make it to have *both* a literal and a figurative sense. And if *they* may so deal with the word *Death*, others may so deal with the word *Life*, without risk, one would imagine, of blame from any of those who refuse allegiance to that same principle of interpretation for themselves.

v. And as to the remark with which the reviewer clenches his argument, saying—"The term life, &c. If life means happy existence, death may mean miserable existence; a supposition entirely fatal to Mr. Dobney's argument"—I submit the question, whether his latter phrase "miserable

existence" is the proper antithesis to the former, "happy existence." My evidently acute and every way to be respected opponent is professedly arguing against the word 'life' having a *compound* meaning, that is, against its meaning, 1. Existence, and 2. That that existence is a happy one. But his objection drawn from the antithetical term 'death' represents an antithesis to *only one part of the compound idea*. Whereas in fairness it ought to be an antithesis to both parts, thus,—If life means a *happy* EXISTENCE, death must mean a *miserable* DESTRUCTION, a miserable dying out of existence. Here the antithesis is complete; which it is not in the sentence I have quoted. And thus a fair adoption of his own principle confirms instead of confuting my argument.

And arguing more correctly as it seems to me, that is, deriving the meaning of each of the two parts of a compound idea from its antithetical fellow, how could the reviewer consistently object to my stating the case as derived from his own article thus,—The reviewer affirms the death threatened to the wicked to mean *miserable* EXISTENCE; which is a compound idea. The antithesis to which must in all propriety be a compound idea too, each part of it being exactly antithetical to its fellow in the first. Therefore the life promised to the righteous must mean a *happy* DEATH! Here each part of the compound idea has its exact opposite; the antithesis is perfect. But then the conclusion is inadmissible. The premises from which it is legitimately derived therefore must be refused; that is, the definition given of death, that it means 'miserable existence.' This must be abandoned, for, adhered to, it involves an absurdity as soon as it is tested by the law of antithesis fairly applied. Still further,—

vi. Kindred passages serve also to guide us to the literal interpretation. For if we had other texts of scripture, in which permanent existence was promised in other phraseology than that now under consideration, it would doubtless strengthen the conviction that we are right in literally interpreting such terms as—everlasting life, living for ever, &c. But we certainly have such texts. And 1. John ii. 17 might be adduced as an example,—'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; *but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*' No one, it is presumed, will wish to set aside the literal rendering here, or attempt to make the



assertion convey any other idea than that of the mighty fact of never-ending existence; seeing that it is antithetically asserted of the righteous, in distinction from the transitoriness and evanescence of the world. So that here, also, the glorious prerogative of infinite existence is made the subject matter of declaration, and in reference to a particular class, in a manner which refuses to be sublimated by the spiritualising process, and demands the rigorous adoption of the literal sense.

And this passage reminds us of the promise recorded by Isaiah, liii. 10, as rendered by Bishop Lowth, (Dwight also adopting it)—“If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see *a seed which shall prolong their days.*” —Quite in accordance with many other prophetic assertions, as, for example, Psalm lxxxix. 35, ‘His seed shall endure for ever;’ and xxi. 4. ‘He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.’

If, however, the Bishop’s rendering should be objected to, the argument does not suffer, inasmuch as, on the received translation, prolonged existence, notwithstanding he should die, would then be promised to the Messiah—‘he shall prolong his days.’\* Accordantly with the promise in another Messianic psalm, ‘Thou wilt show me the path of life,’ xvi. 11, and again, ‘With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.’ xci. 16.

But before we quit our present subject, I may remark that it has often been interesting to observe how preachers and commentators, as if unconscious of the conclusions to which their statements would necessarily lead, sometimes treat quite literally passages of the kind we have adduced. We may select one illustration from among preachers, and another from among expositors.

The late Robert Hall, in a sermon on 1. John v. 12, ‘He that hath the Son hath life,’ remarked, “There were four ways in which we may become possessors of what was not our own: first, by force; second, by purchase; third, by inheritance; fourth, by donation. The possession of Jesus Christ was by the gift of the Father: the Father only adequately rewards the Son by conferring eternal life

\* Similar is the rendering by Dr. Ferdinand Hitzig, by Michaelis, Seiler, Gesenius, and Rosenmueller; quoted by Dr. Pye Smith in his invaluable work on the Sacrifice and Priesthood of Jesus Christ. p. 288, &c.

on his followers; . . . *No less a gift than the making them partakers of his own eternity!*"\*

If we partake of eternal existence through Christ, then of course none except his followers are immortal; and so the whole doctrine of this work is drawn after this first principle. So difficult is it for anything but truth to be thoroughly consistent.

Of expositors, let us take Professor Stuart, Selecting him in preference to all others, because he has, in a most able treatise which is far beyond my praise, maintained the eternity of hell torments; in which, while he denies, as we have seen on a former page (101-2) that reason can prove man immortal, he nevertheless strangely omits to make good this indispensable first point, the very foundation stone of his whole superstructure; but quietly taking it for granted, has thereby built his prison house for eternal misery on the sands, or in other words, rendered his otherwise masterly work nugatory for his purpose. Strong is the bow which his right hand holds, and bright and pointed are the feathered arrows of his quiver, but—the bowstring is awanting.

But leaving his book on the subject, and turning to his latest valuable contribution to our theological stores, we shall find that even he fails to keep clear of the admission which overthrows the doctrine of a universal immortality, and with it that of eternal misery. It shall suffice to quote his remarks on the Water of Life, and Book of Life. Thus he writes on—

Rev. iii. 5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

"*I will not blot out*, that is,—I will suffer to remain, or cause to be retained. The form of expression is a *litotes*, that is, an affirmative sense attached to a negative form of expression. *Book of life* is a frequent idea in both the old and new testament. Heaven is first conceived of as a *city*; then those admitted to dwell there are *citizens*; their names of course are conceived of as inscribed in the city-register. Names thus inscribed in cities on earth, are blotted out

\* Fifty Sermons delivered by the Rev. Robert Hall, M.A., from Notes, &c, by Rev. T. Grinfield, M.A. p. 483.

when life ceases, or when crime is committed, and forfeiture of privilege ensues. *Not to be blotted out, of course implies therefore continued life and privilege.*"

But if not to be blotted out of the book of life, is equivalent to affirming their "continued life,"—then, seeing this is graciously promised as a peculiar privilege to a class, it would follow, as a matter of course, that others will be thus blotted out, that is, will not have "continued life." For how can that be seriously promised as a privilege and a reward, which is already possessed independently and inalienably? But let us recur again to Professor Stuart's Commentary.—

Rev. xxii. 1. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.

"In Gen. ii. 10, seq. we have a description of a river in Eden for the sake of watering the garden. But the writer had in his mind the passage in Ezek. xlvii. 1—12, where a stream issues from under the new temple, and disports in various directions. So here, a river issues from the throne of God and the Lamb, in the new city. The whole is modelled after the oriental manner of building palaces, near or in which a fount of water, or *jet d'eau*, is indispensable, for the sake of coolness and refreshment. The implication is, of course, that they who drink of these *waters of life* are immortal, that is, will never die."

But if to drink of the waters of life is a beautiful figure for the idea of possessing immortality; and if to drink of these waters of life is set forth as one of the glorious prerogatives of the followers of the Lamb, as indeed it is, then it ought to be conceded, that neither did they originally possess this immortality in their own right, nor are they immortal whose obstinate rejection of the Saviour excludes them from these waters of life.

I trust the objections against a literal interpretation of the terms in question have been fairly met, and that it will be seen the preponderance of argument is in favor of the view suggested. But let us not close this chapter without again distinctly recognising an important fact; namely, that our conclusion will not be in the least degree invalidated by the adduction of passages, be they ever so numerous, in which Life—Eternal Life is used metaphorically. For

if there were a thousand texts in which fair criticism could find only the figurative employment of the term, these would not detract from the authority of those other texts relating to the righteous, in which an enlightened criticism would find the literal sense. And then if there were such, be they ever so few, they establish the doctrine that life infinitely protracted (immortality) is the gift of God through Christ to those who believe.

And then again, if immortality be a prerogative conferred on the pious through the Mediator, it must follow that sinners were not *ab initio* endowed therewith; and also that none who reject Christ and his great salvation will live for ever; and so, consequently, the threatening to them of destruction, of perishing, of second death, must be literally understood; and therefore the death threatened to Adam was that which has been already intimated, and the popular doctrine, unsustained by scripture, must be abandoned. Yes, all this, if there be only one text in scripture which teaches that life, in its literal sense, is conferred by Christ as a blessing on believers. And this view, happily, harmonises the whole of the sacred writings on this and kindred subjects; so that, though on this point, we recede from orthodoxy, we in that proportion approach nearer to truth; though we shake a human system, I thank God, we establish the scriptures.

Nor will the affectionate disciple of Christ fail to recognise the proof, hereby afforded, of the personal dignity of the Son of God. Who is he that has the power and the right to confer immortality on whomsoever he will? Verily, he of whom it is said, 'in him was life,' and who can truly say 'I give unto my sheep eternal life,' manifestly stands before us 'in the form of God,' and as though in very deed he deemed it no usurpation to equal himself with God. To whom then shall we bend the knee in reverent adoration, if not to him who, as the Prince of Life, can place upon our brow the diadem of immortality? Well may we be ever 'looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ;' for, 'when Christ, WHO IS OUR LIFE, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.'

Meanwhile, shall not those on whom his royal name is named, be solicitously careful to glorify him who, to bring



them back from the land and shadow of death, counted not his own life dear to him, but yielded himself to death, in order that he might destroy death, and deliver them who through fear thereof would else have been all their lifetime subject to the bondage of most miserable despair. But now, where is thy sting, O Death? O Grave, where is thy victory? Through Christ, the mortal shall put on immortality; and Death, that last enemy, shall be destroyed. Hallelujah! for the last Adam is a LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT. Well may the apostle say, ‘the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if *one died for all, then were all dead*; and he *died* for all, that they who *live*, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.”

Lord, henceforth engrave this sacred law of gratitude more deeply upon our hearts, and let our lives show forth thy praise.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

---

**EXAMINATION OF PARTICULAR TEXTS.**—Mark ix. 43, &c. Worm that dieth not, and fire that is not quenched—Matt. xxv. 46. These shall go away into everlasting punishment—2. Thess. 1-9. Punished with everlasting destruction from, &c.—Rom. ii. 8-9. Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish—Rev. xiv. 10. Smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever—Rev. xx. 10-14. Tormented day and night for ever—Cast into the lake of fire—Matt. xvi. 25. Lose his own soul—Matt. iii. 7-12. Chaff burned up with unquenchable fire—Other texts—Result.

Hitherto we have been chiefly occupied with suggesting general principles, and with showing the insufficiency of the basis on which the doctrine of eternal misery is made to rest. Yet while these general principles, if sound, carry the entire result, which is also obtained if the popular notion be shown to be unfounded, yet probably there may all along have lurked in some minds the conviction that, although the popular notion is open to objections that it may not be easy to answer, yet the plain unambiguous testimony of scripture is so decisive, that it has only to be adduced, and the controversy is settled to the triumph of orthodoxy.

And yet the devout christian who has implicitly received the common doctrine, and trembled at the bare thought of calling its correctness in question, will be surprised to find how few texts even *seem* to support the notion. Let him collect them, and he will perceive that most of them are highly figurative; so that the real sentiment has to be brought out from underneath the drapery in which it is so strikingly exhibited. When, for example, we read of flames, do we suppose that there will be real fire? If so, fire would very soon utterly consume any *bodies* that might be cast into it, unless they were all preserved therefrom by a never-ceasing miracle, and rendered eternally incombustible. And if the bodies were once consumed, and perished, as material bodies must soon be in material flames, the

*spirit* would not be hurt by fire, whatever its intensity. And if any one supposes the fire to be material, then he must literally understand the mention of the worm that never dies. And then we have vast multitudes of immortal worms! But as no one in the present day will press this sense, the question is fairly open—What is meant by unquenchable fire, and a never-dying worm?

Let us devote the present chapter to an examination, separately though briefly, of some of the chief passages of the new testament, which treat of the future sentence of the ungodly. And for the sake of replying at once to the question just proposed, we may begin with—

§ MARK ix. 43—48.

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into that fire that never shall be quenched;

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched;

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Very terrible is the announcement which our Lord thrice repeats. And assuredly we have no wish in the faintest degree to diminish its terribleness. But we have now simply to inquire its meaning.

This phraseology was by no means new. It was familiar to the minds of the people who gathered round our Lord. From their early childhood it had repeatedly fallen on their ears, being of not unfrequent recurrence in the sacred books which were read in their synagogues every sabbath day. The Teacher of Nazareth was himself a jew, and he adopted the well-known phraseology of the ancient prophets of the nation.

Thus Ezekiel wrote, xx. 45—48. ‘Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; and say

to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein. And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: it shall not be quenched.' A brief explanation of which may be subjoined.

Ezekiel being in the northern part of Chaldea, Judea would be to the south of him. 'The forest of the south means the people of that land. The impending judgments of God were to be to them as a people what fire would be to trees. And just as trees would be consumed by the 'flaming flame that should not be quenched,' so should the Jewish people as a nation be utterly desolated.

Here then fire is the symbol of destruction. And it is called unquenchable, simply to denote that nothing should arrest its progress till it had consumed that whereon it preyed.

So too Jeremiah had written, xvii. 27, 'But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to hear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.' Where again the meaning is similar, namely, that desolating judgments are threatened against the people, who, in their national capacity should be destroyed. An idea set forth by the figure of Jerusalem, their metropolis, being burned with fire that should never be quenched. But who would ever dream of city gates and palaces burning for ever? Beyond all dispute 'unquenchable fire,' when the phrase is used by the prophets, is the symbol of utter destruction.

So Isaiah had expressed himself more than once, to whose language we will attend somewhat more particularly. Thus, denouncing the judgments of God against the land of Edom, he says—xxxiv. 8—15. "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste;



none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be a habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow; there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with his mate."

Now here no one has ever dreamed of interpreting literally. For the streams of Idumea never have been turned into pitch, nor the dust into brimstone, nor has the land ever become burning pitch. Moreover it is said in the same connection, the owl and raven, &c., shall dwell there, which would be quite irreconcilable with a literal interpretation. What then can the meaning be but precisely that which every one understands it to be? Namely, that this terribly expressive imagery is employed to set forth the idea of utter and hopeless desolation, ruin; in fact, destruction as a nation.

Thus Barnes correctly explains it:—Isaiah xxxiv. 9. "*And the streams thereof.* The idea here is, that there would be utter and permanent destruction. There would be as great and awful a destruction as if the streams every where should become pitch or resin, which would be set on fire, and which would fill the land with flame and desolation. This image is very striking, as we may see by supposing the river and streams in any land to flow not with water, but with heated pitch, turpentine, or tar, and that this was all suddenly kindled into a flame. It cannot be supposed that this is to be taken literally. The image is evidently taken from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xix. 25-28), an image which is more fully used in reference to the same subject in Jer. xlix. 17-18. 'And Edom shall be a desolation;—as in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbor cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.' *And the dust thereof into brimstone.* The ruin shall be as entire as if all the soil were turned into brimstone, which should be ignited and left burning. 10. *It shall not be quenched night nor day.* That is, the burning brimstone and pitch (ver. 9), the emblem of perpetual and entire desolation, shall not be extinguished."

Before adverting to the next passage of Isaiah, it will be as well to remind the reader of the circumstances connected with the valley of Hinnom (whence the word Gehenna) also called Tophet. It lay just outside Jerusalem, to the south-east of the city, and was a deep valley, formerly very fertile, and, abounding in pleasant trees, afforded a delightful retreat. This spot was selected by the idolatrous people for the worship of Moloch. Here his horrid image was set up—made of brass and hollow, which being heated, their children were placed within its arms as a sacrifice grateful to the god, while loud drums were beaten to drown the cries of the innocent victims. At a later day it was purposely defiled, and made a receptacle for all the filth of the city. The carcases of malefactors were cast there. And to consume the putrifying remains, and prevent contagion, fires were kept perpetually burning. Thus it became a most noisome and hideous spot; and the smouldering fires that were ever to be seen there, the half-burnt corpses, and the worm rioting on corruption, would well supply the most terrific imagery.

In allusion to all this, Isaiah, when foretelling the destruction of the vast Assyrian army that encamped before Jerusalem, and threatened soon to make an end of it, says, that just as if this place had been purposely prepared for them, shall they perish and be consumed.—xxx. 27—33. “Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with anger, and the burden thereof is heavy, and his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire. And his breath as an overflowing stream shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a girdle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Ye shall have a song as in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hail-stones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets, and harps; and in battles of shaking will he fight

with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." And here probably the carcases of the hundred and fourscore and five thousand men whom the angel of the Lord slew in one night, were brought to be consumed.

We may now turn to the closing sentences of Isaiah's prophecies.—"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me. For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." lxvi. 23-4.

The complete triumph of the cause of true religion is here set forth under most appropriate and striking imagery. The people of God are represented as victorious over all their adversaries. And as the inhabitants of a long-beleagured city, whose foes at length are all destroyed, come forth and walk over the field of recent conflict, where their enemies to a man were yesterday stricken down, and mark with stern satisfaction the completeness of their overthrow, and watch the fires that are kindled to consume their putrifying remains,—so shall the faithful followers of God one day see all opposition and hostility for ever effectually put down. But let it be observed that the imagery conveys the idea of complete destruction exclusively;—not the lingering torment, but the utter end of the wretched enemy. It is their '*carcases*' that are lying exposed under the face of heaven. And it is on their *carcases* that the worm riots, or the flame kindles in order to consume.

Here then we have the origin of the new testament phraseology. We first read of unquenchable fire, and of a worm that never dies, in the prophets. Where either literal fire is not at all intended, but is used as an image of complete destruction; or else, though called unquenchable, is called so, not as absolutely and in itself unextinguishable, but relatively to the object cast into it; fire that should not cease to burn till the carcases were consumed. Now, whatever the sense which an english reader, not very heedful of the old testament, would put on such figurative expressions, to the minds of the jewish people, to whom

they were addressed, the one idea would be that of final and irretrievable ruin; not never-ending torment, but utter and everlasting destruction.

If indeed we had met with such language for the first time in the new testament, we might perhaps have said,—Fire is the most terribly expressive metaphor for torment, and unquenchable fire will therefore denote unceasing torment. And this would be fair, if the figure occurred for the first time, and there were no other passages to assist in the right interpretation. But even then, it would have been equally fair for another to reply,—No, fire is that element which, more than all else, utterly consumes and destroys what it kindles on; so that it is manifestly employed to denote the hopeless destruction of the wicked. This would have been as fair as the former. But when we recur to the origin of the phraseology, this last interpretation becomes the only allowable one. The *usus loquendi* of the prophets, from whom it is derived, decides the matter, especially when this so completely harmonises with all the other parts of scripture.

§ Matt. x. 28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

We need not explain what it is for the body to be killed—to be deprived of life—of all conscious existence. Our Lord well knew the only idea his phrase about destroying the body could possibly convey. But he uses the word ‘destroy’ as equivalent to the word ‘kill,’ which he had used in the preceding clause, and uses it in reference to *both body and soul*. Evidently teaching the disciples, what indeed none ought ever to have doubted, that it is at all events in the power of God to kill the soul, to destroy it, as the body is destructible. And he teaches them to fear *on this very account*; and to let this greater fear of God, who could destroy *both* body and soul, overpower and expel the lesser fear of persecutors, who were ‘not able to kill the soul,’ but could only destroy the body. In other words, our Lord certainly did set before his hearers, as a fearful warning, the idea of an entire destruction of their whole conscious being. This, I think, was unquestionably the only idea of which his words were fairly representative,



and which they must unavoidably suggest. And if the thing itself be deemed impossible, or if it shall be affirmed that God never will destroy both body and soul in hell, then did the 'Faithful and true Witness' do what some of his followers (with reverence be it spoken) would scruple to do, and ought to scruple,—namely, employ as a motive an argument, the perfect inaccuracy of which was at the time known to him. For, since the soul is not indestructible, the use of the word 'destroy,' in reference to both it and the body, could, it is submitted, fairly convey but one idea. The sense of the word as used in reference to the body, which could be understood, would fix the meaning of it as applied to the soul.

Nor is this the only similar use of the word 'destroy.' From several instances let us take one. 'The last enemy shall be destroyed—Death,' where the only possible meaning, and universally received, is—shall utterly and for ever cease to be. Death personified is to cease to exist. This cessation is called destruction. The sinner is destroyed too—loses his soul—his life—his whole life. And this may appropriately introduce another text, namely,—

§ Matt. xxv. 46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

This is one of the three very strongest passages which can be adduced in support of the popular doctrine of a literal eternity of torment for the ungodly. The same term of duration, *αιώνιον*, [everlasting] is really used in reference to the punishment of the wicked, which is employed in reference to the happiness of the righteous. This is beyond dispute. So that it is scarcely to be wondered at, that multitudes should rest satisfied with the easy argument,—“If the everlasting misery of the one class may terminate, so may the blessedness of the other; for since the self-same word is employed in both cases, the happiness and the misery must be of equal duration.”

This is easily said. Every brain can comprehend, and every tongue repeat it. And it looks so very like a sound and conclusive argument, that one is not surprised to find 'the many,' when it has once been put into their mouths, abundantly satisfied with it. With multitudes it is of course perfectly decisive, and renders all investigation

superfluous and idle. But it does utterly surprise me to find any intelligent christians laying much stress on an argument, whose insufficiency is so apparent the moment one looks at all beneath the surface. So it is however. And men at whose feet one might be glad to sit in silence for twice the period that Pythagoras imposed, have adduced it as perfectly conclusive. It demands therefore the most respectful consideration, and I submit to the candid inquirer the following suggestions.

i. The argument derived from the use of the same epithet, everlasting, is not decisive; and that for several reasons. And even if there were no other passage which affirmed what would be the ultimate doom of the incorrigible, and if this were the only one in all the new testament which taught anything on the subject, even then it would not prove an absolute eternity of woe. For while, on the one hand, no man can deny that the word *αἰώνιος*, [everlasting] and those of kindred import are repeatedly, and most frequently even, used in the sense of an absolute eternity; as when used in reference to God, (of whose immortality however we are convinced without the use of this term, which indeed does not add to the strength of our conviction) and as used in reference to the righteous (of whose never-ending happiness we are all convinced by other lines of reasoning, and not by the use of this word alone;\*) so, on

\* “The unfixed practice of our english translators in rendering the scripture terms of duration, has thrown a disadvantage upon certain very momentous questions, and has made many affirmations of the inspired writers *seem* vague, which probably were to themselves, and to their first readers, quite definite; or at least more so than they are to our ears. The confusion hence arising has led certain controversialists to found an argument upon the supposed force of a single term (*αἰώνιος*) to which scripture usage has given a very great latitude of meaning; and which therefore must, in every place, receive its specific value from the subject in hand. Most fully may it be granted that in the apostolic axiom—as well as in many other places—‘The gift of God is eternal life,’ there is included—infinite, or never-ending existence. But our persuasion of this fact must not be made to hinge on the native or independent force of the adjective there employed; but upon the evident intention of the writer, as illustrated or confirmed by other means.” *Saturday Evening*, p. 454–5.

We may quote also from Professor Stuart, who says,—“If he (the reader) be accustomed to philological and exegetical studies, he will also perceive that, so far as the simple idea of the word *αἰών* is con-

the other hand, ought no man to deny that these terms are often used in a limited sense.

It cannot be denied, for instance, that they are sometimes used to denote simply a very long, but indefinite period, and in cases where it would be absurd, and indeed impossible, to attach to them the notion of an absolute eternity; and that they are sometimes used when the palpably evident intention is to affirm that that condition which is predicated, shall continue so long as the person or system to which it relates shall last, without thereby affirming the absolute eternity thereof.\*

So then eternal misery might be misery which continued as long as the individual threatened therewith should continue, without deciding that he would exist for ever; and which, if true, would have to be independently established. So that before this text can be fairly adduced as proving the sinner will exist for ever in misery, an opponent must prove the sinner to be immortal. In which case his argument will be less unsound; although he must know, if he

cerned, the sense of it is substantially the same in *all* the cases now to be designated; and that the different shades by which the word is rendered, depend on the object with which *αἰών* is associated, or to which it has a relation, rather than on any differences in the real meaning of *αἰών* itself." *Exegetical Essays, &c.*

\* All the land which thou seest, to thee [Abram] will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. The utmost bound of the everlasting hills. Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Ye shall observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. His master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him for ever. Your seed shall inherit it [the land] for ever. An everlasting priesthood. An everlasting statute. The house shall be established for ever to him. They shall be your bondmen for ever. It shall be for an ordinance for ever. The earth [land] which God giveth thee for ever. It shall be a heap for ever. These stones shall be a memorial for ever. The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee [Gehazi] and to thy seed for ever. Him and his sons for ever to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto him and to bless in his name for ever. Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed. And this city shall remain for ever. The land which I gave unto your fathers for ever and ever. The everlasting mountains were scattered. Everlasting chains until, &c. Gen. xiii. 15; xlix. 26. Exod. xii. 14; 17; xxi. 6; xxxii. 13; xl. 15. Lev. xvi. 34; xxv. 30; 46. Numb. x. 8. Deut. iv. 40; xiii. 16. Josh. iv. 7. 2 Kings v. 27. 1. Chron. xxiii. 13. Is. xxxiii. 20. Jer. xvii. 25; vii. 7. Hab. iii. 6. Jude 6. with many other passages which a concordance will supply.

have competently investigated, that the case would not even then be entirely closed.

But if an opponent should still persist in pointing to the use of the same epithet 'everlasting,' and refuse to allow any weight to the above suggestions, I take leave to inquire, whether his philological principles will not somewhat disqualify him to maintain the truth of christianity itself. Never could he convert an intelligent Jew to the christian faith. For what is one of the favorite strongholds in which a son of Abraham intrenches himself against the followers of Jesus of Nazareth? Is it not this—that the polity and ordinances of judaism were to be 'everlasting?' Just as strenuously as do some of my opponents persist in repeating 'everlasting misery,' adducing the word everlasting as precluding argument, and foreclosing all discussion, just so pertinaciously does the jew turn a deaf ear to all the christian arguments, and doggedly repeat that the 'statutes of Moses,' the 'ordinances of the house of Jacob' are 'for ever;' they are 'everlasting;' so they cannot terminate and cease, to be superseded by something else;—wherefore christianity must be utterly false—an imposition. See just what it is that blinds the eye of the unhappy jew to this very day. And what is it that hardens his heart against our blessed religion? What but precisely the same argument which my opponents adopt, when they affirm that the word 'everlasting' must prove the misery of the sinner to be eternal. Earnestly and affectionately do I entreat them to look at this; and so to perfect their philology as to enable them to maintain the truth and honor of our holy religion against all comers.

But it is by no means, or in any degree, on the foregoing remarks that I would rest the answer to the argument derived from our present text. Those remarks are only intended to remind the inquirer of the difficulty which an opponent ought honestly to feel, in the way of his affirming the eternity of hell-torment from this passage. I consent with all my heart to waive them even; I do waive them altogether; and rest the case entirely, so far as this text is concerned, on my next reply, to which rather I invite attention.

ii. Let it be cheerfully granted, then, that the word everlasting must, in each part of this text, be understood in its largest widest sense, as denoting an absolute eternity.



Let this be conceded. And I not only concede it—I affirm it, and believe it. What then? Does my opponent make out his case any more satisfactorily? Not a whit. He gains nothing thereby. I know very well how this text is perpetually quoted—or, one might say, misquoted. People are not content with the phrase ‘everlasting punishment;’ they must substitute another word for punishment. And what shall it be? Misery, or torment, no matter which. And so our Lord is represented as saying, ‘These shall go away into everlasting *misery*’ (or torment). Whereas he says nothing of the kind. Let us reverently adhere to his own expression; he says, ‘everlasting *punishment*,’ and not ‘everlasting *torment*.’ And the two things are utterly distinct. I affirm as strongly as any man that the wicked *shall* go away into everlasting punishment; but then I deem it my duty to say as our Lord said, ‘punishment.’ I have not the presumption to correct his phraseology, in order to harmonise it with my notions. But orthodoxy does this. And it is only by substituting ‘misery,’ or ‘torment,’ for punishment, that this text can be made to support the popular doctrine. But let us not add to his words, lest he reprove us.

It is an indisputable fact, and terrible enough, my brethren, without our exaggeration, that the wicked *shall* go away into everlasting punishment. But what is punishment? Is misery, or torment, a fair and proper synonym? It will not be asserted. Johnson defines punishment “any infliction imposed in vengeance of a crime.” Whatever a judge justly awards to an offender for his crime is punishment. Stripes—fines—deprivation—imprisonment—degradation—death—may be the ‘punishment’ awarded in an earthly court. And whether it be a night’s confinement in a cell awarded to a child, or a flogging awarded to a young thief, or transportation to the felon, or death to the murderer, it is with equal propriety called punishment in each case. And the substitution of the word ‘misery’ or ‘torment,’ would be utterly inadmissible. Yet the present text will not answer the purpose of my opponents unless they make such substitution, which in pulpit harangues I have perceived to be generally done. But as many of them, whose aim I am sure, like my own, is only to ascertain the true mind of the Spirit, will acquiesce in the propriety of adhering to the use of the word ‘punishment,’ in which case I

agree with them that it will be everlasting, the issue is joined on the question—What is the everlasting punishment which this text affirms, but does not define?

And so this text cannot prove the popular doctrine, which has to derive the answer from other portions of scripture. So that we are precisely where we were,—agreed however that, whatever it is, it will be everlasting.—And then I submit, in general, that the whole of the second part of this volume is a reply to the question. But not to pass away under cover of the general plea, though fair, I shall trouble the reader with another consideration.

iii. The question is narrowed, be it remembered, to this, What is the punishment which is to be everlasting? And here each party must be prepared to concede what is fair. On the one side, I of course admit that the everlasting infliction of torment would be everlasting punishment. On the other side it must also be allowed, that, in case God should really destroy the incorrigible, literally destroy them, so that they for ever cease to be, this infliction of death would be punishment. No one would, in such a case, hesitate to say that utter destruction constituted the punishment threatened to the ungodly. It is believed that no one could possibly object to the use of the word punishment in such a connection. And then surely a complete and final and irretrievable destruction—a destruction which is for ever, is to all intents an everlasting destruction. And so everlasting destruction would be everlasting punishment. And for the phrase everlasting destruction we have the highest authority in 2. Thess. i. 10, to be presently considered. And it is submitted that this text affords—not only a warrant for calling destruction a punishment, and applying thereto the epithet everlasting—but also a fair exposition of the passage we are considering—

These shall go away into  
everlasting punishment.

Who shall be punished with  
everlasting destruction.

In corroboration of which, it may be observed, that the everlasting punishment affirmed by our Lord, Matt. xxv. 46, is the same thing as is threatened in v. 41, where our Lord represents himself as addressing the same party (as in our text he is speaking of them) ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.’ But that fire is everlasting,

in relation to the object cast into it, which is not quenched till the object itself is consumed, just as chaff is said, Matt. iii. *to be burned up* with unquenchable fire. And as has been already shown, the scripture usage of the phrase, everlasting fire, shuts us up to the idea of complete destruction.

Hoping the reader will consider that this often quoted passage has been fairly examined, and will perceive that it affords of itself no warrant for the popular doctrine, we will pass on to the examination of another text.

§ 2. THESS. i. 7—9. And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

In commencing our remarks on this awfully important passage, we may repeat that, by a generally received canon of interpretation, the literal sense is to be preferred wherever possible. To understand the threatening here in its literal meaning involves nothing impossible; since of course God *can* blot out of existence, if need be, those who continue only by his sustaining power. Nor does it contradict any other portion of scripture, we think, but on the contrary, harmonises with all the other statements concerning the doom of the incorrigible. If the apostle had intended to express the idea of a literal and complete destruction, he could not have selected more appropriate phraseology; while, had he meant to convey the notion of an eternity of torment, we find it difficult to conceive of this as the most fitting vehicle for such a sentiment. The presumption then is in favor of the literal sense.

And so strongly have expositors felt this, that some of them admit the literal sense in part.—Thus, for example, Whitby, who takes the ‘flaming fire’ to be literal, says—

“These positive torments on the body are not to begin until the raising of the body, when Christ ‘shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them who would not obey his gospel,’ ‘the world that now is being reserved to be set on fire, for the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.’ At which time I conceive the righteous

shall be 'snatched up into the air, and be for ever with the Lord,' 1. Thess. iv. 17, and the wicked shall be left to the devouring flames.

"I also do conjecture that this fire may be called *eternal*, not that the bodies of the wicked shall be for ever burning in it, and never be consumed by it, since this cannot be done without a constant miracle; but because *it shall so entirely consume their bodies as that they shall never subsist again*, but shall perish and be destroyed for ever by it."—*Whitby in loc.*

He afterwards goes on to declare his belief that the soul, thus separated a second time, by this second death of the body, will exist for ever in misery. I need not animadvert on any part of the exposition, as my only object is to show how the phrase 'everlasting destruction' is taken literally, as to one part of man, by a commentator who, taking for granted the soul's immortality, is therefore obliged in consistency to understand this phrase as having a literal signification as to one part of the sinner, and a metaphorical sense as to the other part. Similar is Macknight, who says;—

"So that our Lord's sentence [Matt. xxv. 41] is to be understood literally of the devil and his angels, as well as of the wicked; and that the effect of this burning upon both will be *the utter destruction of their bodies*, without any hope of their ever regaining new bodies; while their spirits, surviving the destruction of their bodies, so long as it shall please God, shall be made unspeakably miserable by their own thoughts, without any enjoyment whatever to alleviate the bitterness of their most melancholy state." In his next note, he expounds the 'everlasting destruction' of our text to be the destruction (literally) of the "animal life," though not of "the thinking principle." *Macknight in loc.*

So obvious, we see, was the literal sense to these expositors, that they readily adopt it to the fullest extent which their mental philosophy would allow. But what reason there is to make a distinction which the inspired apostle does not draw, I confess I do not so readily perceive. For beyond dispute, the sinner in his entireness *can* be destroyed literally; and if the word has any literal force at all in this passage, I submit that it comes in all its tremendous fulness against the whole man, and not merely against a part of his nature.



But the only reasons that can be alleged against literally understanding the threatened destruction as pertaining to the whole man, are,—that the man, as to some part of his nature, is indestructible even by the power of God, which no one ought to affirm; or,—that the sinner is immortal, and so cannot be literally destroyed; which must be proved as well as affirmed; or,—that this rendering would contradict other passages, which being plainer must give the sense to the more obscure. Against which all the arguments suggested in this work lie, while the literal sense harmonises with all other parts of scripture that bear directly or indirectly on the subject. The error that lies at the root of so many expositions is the quiet and perfectly unquestioned assumption that every man is immortal. Which even they, as easily as others, take for granted, who concede that this cannot be established by reason, and who do not previously establish it from scripture, nor independently of those very texts to the interpretation of which they bring the unproved doctrine as the fitting key.

Here it may be well, however, to notice two objections which the Eclectic Review has urged against the literal rendering of our text. The *First* is drawn from the addition of the phrase, ‘from the presence,’ &c., and is thus expressed—

“If by destruction a cessation of being had been here intended, the apostle would naturally have closed with that word. With this meaning, what can be intended by ‘destruction (cessation of being) from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?’ The language is not only redundant but unintelligible. It seems obvious, that the destruction specified is a punitive banishment from the presence of the Lord Jesus, and exclusion from those displays of his glory which will constitute so large a portion of the blessedness of his saints.”

To which it may be replied, that to me it seems equally obvious that, if the apostle had meant this, he could have expressed it much better than by representing the sinner as eternally destroyed. And that so far from this banishment from the presence of Christ, and from the displays of his glory, being a punishment to the sinner, he will not have the slightest wish to be near Christ, nor to behold his glory. And so I might retort on my respected reviewer the language he has (with less correctness however) adopted on another

page, in reference to my view—that the sinner will be utterly destroyed, namely, “That God is by our author’s opinion, brought forward in the majesty of his wrath to denounce against ungodly men as a terrific punishment what actually is to them the greatest possible good!”\* For, certainly, the farther the wicked can remove from a glorified Saviour whom they hate, the better pleased will they be. But it was not to make this observation that I quoted the Review. Let me explain then the strict propriety with which the apostle could say—‘destruction *from the presence* of the Lord, and *from the glory* of his power,’—a phrase at which it surprises me the writer of that article should have stumbled.

The apostle as a jew was, even by early education, much more intimately acquainted with the old testament scriptures than it is common for us to be, (the study thereof constituting a chief part of the education of a jew). It would be perfectly natural, then, for his theological style to be formed, to a considerable extent, on that of his ancient scriptures. And we accordingly find that much of the peculiar language, and allusions, and figurative expressions of the new testament writers generally, is derived from that venerable source. Now the phrase, ‘the presence of the Lord,’ was a very ancient one. As was also another and often equivalent one,—‘the glory of the Lord;’ by which was generally meant, not the moral character of the Divine Being, which according to our ideas chiefly constitutes his especial glory; but that bright luminous cloud of overwhelming splendour which we commonly call the ‘Shekinah,’—the well known *symbol of the divine presence*.

It may not be amiss to add, for the sake of younger readers, that a great many passages of scripture receive their most expressive and truthful illustration from the right understanding of this common jewish phrase, as used in the sense now given. Thus the promise of the coming of the Messiah was conveyed in these terms, ‘The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.’ So the prophet; and the evangelist records, ‘the disciples beheld his glory;’ and all christians, having their minds enlightened from above, behold ‘the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’

\* This objection will be considered more at length in the next chapter.

The supernatural cloud of brightness then, the Shekinah, whence often proceeded the voice of God, was denominated sometimes 'the presence of the Lord,' (from which, as stationed at the entrance to Eden, before which, in all probability, our first parents and the pious of that early age presented themselves, Cain was driven out\*); at other times, 'the glory of the Lord.' And sometimes fire is represented as coming forth from this 'presence of the Lord,' or from 'the glory,' either to consume the sacrifice, as in Lev. ix. 23—4, or to punish the guilty, as Lev. x. 2; Numb. xvi. 19—35. The new testament teaches us eagerly to expect the 'appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ,'—'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,' again, 'and all flesh shall see it together.'

Remembering then the manner in which the Jewish writers used these two phrases, we see with what perfect propriety the apostle could use the peculiar language of the text, to denote, if he wished to do so, that the ungodly should be utterly consumed, and that their destruction would be caused by an all-devouring agency, proceeding forth from the judge, who comes with the 'glory' of the Father. And I ask, does it not seem as if he meant to say that, as sometimes of old devouring flames shot forth from the Shekinah—'the glory of the Lord,' so, when Christ shall appear in 'glory,' to recompense all men, fire shall flash forth from the presence of the Lord, and consume the rebellious, as he had affirmed just before, verse 8, 'in flaming fire taking vengeance,' &c.

I say this without meaning to express any opinion as to whether material fire will be employed, but merely to show, in answer to the reviewer's objection, how naturally the apostle could say 'destruction *from the presence*,' even if he meant a literal destruction.

The Reviewer's *Second* objection to the literal rendering is thus expressed—

"As a further evidence that the term destruction, when used descriptively of the future state of the wicked, cannot be understood of extinction of being, we may notice the annexation to it of the epithet 'everlasting,' as in 2. Thess. i. 9. Considered as extinction of being, destruction must be held to be a summary act. In what sense can it be said to be everlasting? It is in itself a final as well as a momentary act; and the term everlasting, as connected with it, is

\* See Gen. iv. 14—16.

either redundant or unintelligible. Does it not seem clear, that the apostle, in speaking of *everlasting* destruction, means to describe something which has continuance—as a state of suffering, and not the act of a moment—like extinction of being?”

I must confess myself unable to perceive much force in this objection, for it seems to me that the word everlasting may be prefixed with equal propriety to destruction, whether this be understood literally, or metaphorically. The sinner may be everlastingly banished, or everlastingly destroyed. If the adjective be applicable to the one, it is just as much so to the other. And as everlasting banishment would be a banishment never to be revoked, so everlasting destruction is a destruction that being complete and final is never to be reversed; just as the psalmist says, ‘When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that *they shall be destroyed for ever.*’

And does not the reviewer assume too much, when he affirms that destruction is a momentary act? In one sense indeed it is, just as dying may be called a momentary act. There is the *articulum mortis*, I know; that is, there comes a moment when the man ceases to exist, though he did exist the very moment before. And yet the act of dying, (speaking the language of everyday life) is sometimes fearfully protracted, and the precedent strife and anguish are terrible to view. Why then must the second dying be a momentary act (except indeed we determine to construe metaphysically the popular terms of apostles, who wrote chiefly for the common people); why may it not be, if God see fit, awfully protracted? God *can* destroy the sinner altogether; can do it either by an act of his own, or by withholding his sustaining power, in which case the miserable creature would naturally sink into that nothingness out of which he was originally brought. And how fearfully protracted this dying out of existence may be, who can tell? God grant that neither he who writes, nor he who reads these lines may ever know.

I admit that in one sense it must be a momentary act; that there would be a moment in which it might be said—Now he is extinct,—last moment he was in being. But just as common-sense people unhesitatingly say of some poor creature whose death-bed they come from watching,—“He was dying for a whole day and night,” or, “for a



whole week,"—so, for anything we know, may the second death be fearful in the process, to say nothing here of the shivering anticipation and all the precedent misery. For if the soul quit its clay tenement so lingeringly as it often does in the present state, the yielding of itself to death may be in something of the proportion of its superiority to the body. However, all I mean here is to protest against the affirmation that the second death, if it mean destruction, must be "a momentary act;" by which, as seeming to make it devoid of all that is terrible, it almost appears as though the reviewer sought somewhat unfairly (may I be pardoned if wrong) to prejudice the exposition we suggest. Especially when, on a subsequent page, in endeavoring to show that my view after all is nearly as terrible as the popular one, he writes thus, "He holds, moreover, that this [the suffering previous to destruction] does not exhaust the vials of this wrath, but that the threatening comprehends the final extinction of being; which, considered as a punitive act, and as constituting a large part of the wrath against sin, *must be held to be an awful calamity.*"

§ ROMANS ii. 8-9. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

The apostle speaking of the 'day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' (which 'day' would denote some particular period; for eternity is nowhere called the *day* of wrath) affirms that God, who is no respecter of persons, will render to every man according to his deeds. To one class, namely, those who 'have sought for glory, and honor, and immortality,' he will award 'eternal life.' To the other class, the disobedient, who have yielded themselves up to unrighteousness, he will render 'indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.'

Now it is manifest that this passage teaches nothing as to the *duration* of that tribulation and anguish, which his indignation and wrath will occasion. On the supposition of a miserable destruction for the ungodly, there will be terrible scope for the manifestation of the righteous 'indignation' of God, and for the endurance of unutterable 'anguish.' This passage then does not decide anything on our question. Although, if the tribulation and anguish

were never never to cease, one wonders that the apostle did not avail himself of this element of terror, to heighten the description by which he would fain affect the mind, and decide it to seek for glory, honor, and immortality. I think most of the believers of the popular notion would have done so. They seldom, in their harangues on this subject, omit the never-ending character of the anguish. And if the apostle had believed just what they do, it appears to me he would at all events have introduced it here. It would have so well answered, *if it had been true*, his benevolent purpose. But he has not intimated a word of the kind. On the contrary, he speaks first of a *day*, or particular period of wrath; then, of those who have rightly sought for *immortality*,\* obtaining *eternal life*; and finally, of some as *perishing* without law. So that this passage affords no countenance to the doctrine we are opposing; while it does appear even to give some color to the view we believe to be scriptural.

\* I still feel compelled to adhere to our english version of this text, which represents the righteous, by patient continuance in well doing, *seeking for* glory and honor and *immortality*, notwithstanding the Reviewer, with whom it is true are most expositors, says "The position of the word immortality, at the close of the sentence, requires it to be regarded, after the greek idiom, as an adjective; so giving to the whole phrase the idea of immortal glory and honor." Now, I respectfully ask, what is the greek idiom that *requires* this rendering? That the figure *hendiadys* is often used, I most cheerfully concede. But surely no one will affirm, that when two or more nouns come together, the last must be construed adjectively; for how many texts occur to the mind in a moment which refuse submission to such a rule. Take, for instance, the phrase in v. 10 of the same chap., 'But glory, honor, *and peace* to every man that worketh good;' no one renders it 'peaceful glory and honor;' and v. 4., 'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance *and long-suffering*?' 'I am the resurrection *and the life*,' does not mean, I am the living resurrection. So 'Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' where, as I have already shown, is a beautiful gradation and rise in the thought suggested, till we come to the last magnificent result. 'He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation *and comfort*.' 'There shall be weeping, wailing *and gnashing of teeth*.' &c. &c.

Now, since reason cannot prove man immortal, and since the general tenor of scripture seems to make immortality contingent, it appears to me a somewhat arbitrary thing for expositors to affirm that the word immortality is used adjectively here; and I feel bound to retain it as our english version gives it, which represents immortality as a blessing to be sought for.

But let us pass on to the consideration of another text. And as I said there were three passages in particular, which, more than all others, are thought to teach the orthodox doctrine, we will come at once to the examination of them. One however has been already considered, namely, Matt. xxv. 46. The remaining two are found in the book of the Apocalypse. The first is—

§ REV. xiv. 9-11. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

This is indeed an awful passage, and, more decidedly perhaps than any other, seems to favor the common notion of an eternity of misery. And I must confess that I have myself adduced it in former years in support of that doctrine, which I once held as firmly as any do at the present time. But a more careful examination of the text, in its connection, led me to consider my earlier interpretation of it to be untenable; and I respectfully submit the following suggestions to the judgment of the candid inquirer.

i. It is contrary to one of the soundest and most obvious rules of interpretation, to derive a momentarily important doctrine from a book so full of symbol, and of the most elevated poetry, as the book of the Apocalypse is on all hands allowed to be. And the advocates of any tenet—no matter what—must be hard driven, if they are glad to take their stand amid the hieroglyphs that attract us to the isle of Patmos. Nor will the holders of the popular notion themselves consent that other doctrines shall be deduced from, or modified by, the bold and figurative language of this, nevertheless, profoundly interesting and instructive book. The orthodox will not allow their psychology, for instance, to be affected by it. Nor will they suffer the millenarian to prove his theory therefrom. And indeed in reference to all other matters, excepting this of eternal torment, they lay down and apply the soundest principles touching the

interpretation of symbolic language. And I may be allowed to protest against any departure therefrom in favor of a notion, which, more than most others, demands for proof the plainest and most unambiguous testimony of the inspired writers, when in their gravest and least excited moments.

Nevertheless, let us examine the passage. And I think that even if the testimony of the seer, expressed as it is in the most elevated style of poetry and symbol, be allowed to be put in evidence, it will not go the length of serving the cause for which it is called. For I submit that the terror-striking announcement of this 'third angel' does not at all relate to the future condition of sinners after the judgment day. For,—

ii. Their torment is in verse 11, represented as synchronous with their worship. 'They who *worship* the beast *have* no rest,' &c. And then the holy angels and the Lamb alone are mentioned, v. 10, as the spectators of their punishment. Now let it be remembered that these willing worshippers of the beast and his image were the furious agents in the sufferings of the saints, to comfort whom the angel announces the retribution that should overtake their persecutors. If, then, this passage had related to the future state, would not the saints have been naturally associated as spectators with 'the holy angels and the Lamb?' What good reason can be assigned for the omission, except that the judgments threatened in this verse are to take place before the saints have joined the glorious assembly above? That is, that the vengeance denounced is inflicted here on earth, and during the time-state. A conclusion to which I am imperatively compelled by observing another thing, viz.—

iii. That in subsequent chapters we have the fulfilment of these very threatenings exhibited; which fulfilment indisputably takes place here and now. An examination of the general scheme of this portion of the Apocalypse will I trust sustain this view to the satisfaction of the impartial student.

Chapter xiii. commences another grand epoch: to which the preceding chapter is introductory, by again going back to the commencement of the christian era. The xiii<sup>th</sup> is taken up with the vision John had of the first beast, that arose *out of the sea*, with seven heads and ten horns, and who blasphemed God and his name, and his tabernacle, and



them that dwell in heaven. And he made war with the saints, and overcame them, and had power over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. Then the seer beheld another beast coming up *out of the earth*, having two horns, as a lamb, but speaking as a dragon. This doeth great wonders, deceiving the nations, and causing them to make an image to the first beast, which all must worship, or die. And so great is his power that none may buy or sell, but those who receive the mark of the beast.

This xiii<sup>th</sup> chapter, then, opened a fearful state of things for the christians to contemplate. More tribulation for them, even after judaism had lost the power to oppose. Fresh persecutions and fiery trials. Yet, their homes must be outraged, their persons tortured, their lives poured out. Fearful prospects! What will become of the sacred cause they have espoused? Let them be calm. The kingdom of Christ is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. Only let them keep a stout heart, and be undaunted and faithful to the end.

To strengthen their faith, and animate them with confidence amid their sufferings, the xiv<sup>th</sup> chapter discloses pleasant things. It represents in brief that, notwithstanding all, multitudes would be heroically faithful to Christ, whose patient devotedness would inspire the songs of heaven. Then, an angel is seen flying in the outstretched heavens, having the blessed gospel to proclaim all over the earth, in spite of the severe persecutions waged to exterminate the truth. Let this satisfy the suffering saints that the cause, which was dearer to them than life itself, was safe. A second angel then announces the fall of Babylon, speaking according to prophetic style, in the present tense,—‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen,’ &c. as though it had already taken place. Although the catastrophe had not in reality occurred, and is subsequently described more at length.

Then comes the third angel, denouncing the righteous judgments of God against the worshippers of the beast and his image, in the language of our present text. These are to ‘drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation,\* and

\* On our present text, Professor Stuart, who nevertheless, strangely as it appears to me, makes this passage teach the eternity of hell torment, whereas I submit it has no reference to the future state at all, more correctly says (though it makes against his own interpretation

are to be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.'

This angel, having performed his mission, which was so well adapted to sustain the saints during the period of their persecution, retires; and John is left awhile to muse on the vision he had seen. Meditating on the terrible calamities of that period to which chapters xiii. and xiv. relate, he testifies to the need there will be of patience, v. 12. And while so musing, a voice from heaven, confirmatory of his thoughts, bids him write that then it will indeed be a blessed privilege for Christians to die rather than to live, that they may rest from the calamities and labors of that trying period. Then he sees in vision every preparation being made and matured for *executing* the judgments which the angel herald had *announced*. Let the remainder of this xivth chapter be carefully read. It shows judgment beginning, and only beginning.

The xvth exhibits the preparation that is made to execute the threatenings of our text; while the victorious followers of the Lamb sing the song of anticipated triumph. Seven angels receive seven golden vials full of the wrath of God.

The xvth opens with the commission solemnly given to the seven angels, 'Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the *wrath* of God *upon the earth*. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome

which states the threatening to refer to future punishment)—“We must go to the old testament for the full explanation. There God is often said to give the *cup of inflammation* or *indignation* to nations whom he is about to *destroy*; e. g. Is. li. 17. Lam. iv. 21. Jer. xxv. 15–16. xlix. 12. li. 7. Ezek. xxiii. 31–34. Job xxi. 20. Ps. lxxv. 8. Persons intoxicated are unable to destroy or even resist those who assail them; so that to represent them as intoxicated in the way of punishment, is to represent them as devoted to irremedial destruction. Or we may present the matter in another light. Criminals about to suffer, were often through compassion of executioners or bystanders presented with a stupefying potion, which would diminish their sensibility to pain, but which of course was the index or precursor of certain death. Thus in Mark xv. 23, it is recorded that Jesus refused to drink ‘the wine mingled with myrrh,’ which was proffered him when he was about to be nailed to the cross. The holy Saviour would not abate any portion of his agonies, by the use of an intoxicating drink. But in whichever of these two ways the expression in our text is accounted for, the meaning remains substantially the same—for the drinking of such an intoxicating cup is the prelude to certain death.”

and grievous sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image, xvi. 1, 2, [compare our text, xiv. 9 and 10, first clause]. Let the whole of this chapter however be carefully read. The threatened judgments are executed on the kingdom of the beast and on his worshippers. And some of the language in which this is described is precisely that in which the threatenings of our text are couched. See, for instance, verses 8, 9, 10, 11, where they are exhibited as *scorched with fire*, and as fearfully tormented; while the *angel* of the waters, verse 5, and another out of the altar, verse 7, praise the Lord for the righteousness of the judgments.

The xviith chapter is occupied more particularly with the mystic Babylon which is to be destroyed, and v. 16, shows how the ten horns will hate her, and eat her flesh, and *burn her with fire*. While the xviiith goes on to announce the manner in which the judgments just about to overtake her ('she shall be utterly burned with fire,' v. 8,) will affect the spectators,—“The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off, for the fear of her *torment*, weeping and wailing,’ &c. v. 15. ‘And they cried when they saw the *smoke of her burning*,’ &c. v. 18. The sixth shows the joy there would be, when this idolatrous and persecuting power was put down; and in v. 20, the beast and false prophet were ‘cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone.”

With the exception of this last verse, I think it will be apparent that the judgments threatened in xiv. 9, 10, are exhibited in the subsequent chapters as executed upon earth. While the verse just quoted, xix. 20, has no reference at all to the future state after the general judgment, which has not yet taken place. And the language is precisely that of the prophets, already considered, whereby they denoted the entire and utter and final destruction of some hostile power. Moreover, the beast and false prophet are symbolic personages; so that the fire and brimstone are symbolic too. And if we ask, of what,—the answer must be that, by the *usus loquendi* of the inspired writers, this is symbolic of utter desolation and destruction.

So, then, John being his own interpreter, the announcement of the angel in xiv. 9—11 (given both to warn christians against being seduced into worshipping the beast, and to animate them with the certain prospect of

the destruction of those powers that opposed the progress of the gospel) receives its fulfilment in the disquietude and defeat and destruction of the abettors of the beast, so that according to the prediction of the second angel, the blessed gospel should win its triumphant way 'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.'

To my own mind, then, it is evident that this passage, taken in its connection, has no reference whatever to the condition of the wicked after the general judgment; and therefore affords no countenance to the popular doctrine; but even makes against it, by showing the strongest phraseology—'the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,'—used in reference to this present state.

In proceeding to consider the next passage, the very striking one contained in Rev. xx. 10–14, 15. It may prove advantageous to notice the 10th verse and the 15th separately, although the popular doctrine generally connects them. Let us take the former one first.

§ REV. XX. 9–10. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

We have just said that the orthodox commonly connect the 15th verse with this,—namely, 'And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire,' and hence affirm that all the unsaved, devils and men, will exist together for ever in misery.

I trust it has been shown that the other passages generally adduced in support of this notion, not only do not really teach it, but absolutely make against it. But on the present text I submit—

i. That the writer simply affirms that the *devil* shall be tormented for ever and ever; which, whatever be the legitimate meaning (concerning which we need not inquire), no one disputes. At all events, I am not disposed to embarrass my present subjects with any inquiry into the fate of fallen angels. What I have undertaken is sufficient. And so I simply remind the reader that this text says nothing at all about sinners of the human race. It is not



the inspired assertion here that *men* shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever. John does not say they shall. He only says that the *devil* shall. And men are not devils.

This is sufficient so far as this verse is concerned; but we may add another remark.

ii. Whatever this lake of fire may really symbolise, it is before the great day of judgment that the devil is represented as cast into it. It is moreover that into which the beast and the false prophet were previously cast, long before the final close of human history, xix. 20. Now the beast and false prophet are not individual and historical persons really. They are symbolic persons. Many expositors tell us that they symbolise a system, which is to come to an utter end, rather than particular individuals. If so, the idea of torment is not to be literally understood, of course. But this I waive altogether, seeing my subject does not require me to touch upon it. Let it suffice to observe that this verse does not, in any way whatever, refer to sinners of the human race at all; but only to the devil.

There is a sentence, however, of terrific import, only five verses subsequently, which does refer to men, and in somewhat similar terms. And to this we therefore come.

§ REV. xx. 11-15. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to his works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Let this be taken for a highly elevated description of the last judgment and the final doom of the wicked. They are 'cast into the lake of fire.' Verily, the ears of every one that heareth it may tingle at the terrible announcement. But what is the import of the terrific assertion? Orthodoxy ingeniously connects this 15th verse with the one we have just considered, and pronounces thus,—"The lake of

fire is the symbol of the torment the devil shall undergo. This torment is to be day and night for ever and ever. Into this same lake the wicked are to be cast. Therefore they also are to be tormented for ever and ever therein. This is not indeed expressly inserted in the text, but it is a fair inference." On my part I deny the soundness of the reasoning. Let the reader judge.

i. The inference is not a necessary one. Because in the lake of fire the devil shall be tormented for ever, it does not necessarily follow that quite another race of intelligences, cast into the same lake, must *therefore* exist as long as he does, and endure the same torment. If the orthodox use it, it proves too much for them. If they say that,—because the devil, being cast into the lake of fire, is tormented for ever, therefore sinners cast into the same are for that reason tormented for ever,—we must hold them to the point, and they must in fairness affirm something more. They must affirm, for instance, that all men, even the least guilty, will endure precisely the same torment as the devil himself, who has been plying his rebellious and murderous trade these thousands of years; seeing that the least guilty of the lost are cast into precisely the same fire as the devil. But if they shrink from this, as surely they will, and say—No, that can never be; the fire, though precisely the same, will produce various effects, according to the degree of guilt;—they surrender the entire case. For if the same fire may produce different effects, according to the individual, so that the torment of some shall be mild in comparison with that of others, then, though it may torment the devil for ever, it may not torment human sinners for ever. If it may produce different effects, it *may* torment the one and destroy the other. At all events the inference of the orthodox cannot be shown to be a *necessary* one. But further,—

ii. The inference is not a fair one. For while, five verses before, the lake of fire may be the symbol of torment, in the very verse preceding our text it is the symbol, not of torment, but of extinction. In verse 14, Death and Hades, being personified in accordance with the structure of this highly poetic and symbolic book, are represented as both cast into a lake of fire. What then does the being cast into the lake of fire mean, in v. 14? It denotes the utter ceasing to be of Death and Hades. There is to be no

more death. And this plain fact is poetically set forth by the striking image of Death cast into a lake of fire; fire being the acknowledged symbol of the prophets for destruction. So 'Death, the last enemy, is to destroyed.' This is the undisputed sense of v. 14. And all expositors are agreed that here—in the very verse before our text—the lake of fire is the symbol of final destruction, and of nothing else.

When, then, in the very next verse, sinners are represented as cast into the same lake of fire, is it not obvious and legitimate to retain the sense necessarily attached to the symbol of fire in the verse before, rather than to overlook the near and go back to the remoter passage? Especially since even that remoter text itself is fairly open to discussion as to its meaning, while in the nearer passage the meaning is unquestionable.

And to this interpretation we are additionally led by the phrase 'the book of life.' It being those whose names are not found written therein, that are to be cast into the lake of fire. The 'book of life' is a book from which some names are threatened to be blotted out, (xxii. 19, 'God shall take away his part out of the book of life.') So that it does not mean the book in which are recorded the names of those that shall be eternally saved. What does it mean then? On a previous page (199–200) we have given Stuart's explanation, which the reader will perhaps kindly read again, with the remark founded thereon. As to have the name blotted out of the book of life, Rev. iii. would imply forfeiture of life, and that the individual would be blotted out of existence, so, not to have the name found written therein would be equivalent, and would denote that the individual, for some cause, would not obtain everlasting life. So then all whose names were not in this book—all who through their own accursed folly would not lay hold on eternal life—are cast into that lake of fire, which in the immediately preceding sentence is made to symbolise final and everlasting cessation of existence. And the being cast into this lake, into which Death and Hades are cast to be destroyed, is the second death. That is, the sharing the same fate as death and hades meet, which is destruction literally,—'this is the second death.'

So that this passage also harmonises with the rest of scripture, as indeed scripture cannot but be uniform and

consistent. And affording no countenance to the doctrine of an eternity of torment for all the unsaved (and therefore for even the youngest and the least criminal equally with the vilest—for the youthful sinner, and the man who had enjoyed least religious light, though still enough to condemn him,—equally with the devil himself, the wholesale destroyer of virtue and happiness, and ‘who was a murderer from the beginning,’) it does affirm the destruction of all who have not laid hold on eternal life.

And I do venture most respectfully to beseech my fellow christians not to exhibit the Holy One, whose very justice is a perfection, as plunging all the unsaved of every age and nation and degree of responsibility, into one and the same state of never-ending torment; unless indeed, after maturest and devoutest investigation once more bestowed on the solemn theme, they become convinced that it is indeed the doctrine of scripture,—that all of every shade of character, who are not meet for an inheritance among the saints in light, are involved by the righteous judge in one indiscriminate and fiery mass of living torment—the least guilty of the lost hand in hand, and that for ever, with that unutterably fallen spirit who had dared, through long long ages, intelligently and perseveringly to oppose the blessed government of God, and who had been the ruthless deceiver of the nations, and the wholesale murderer of the human race.

For linking the 14th and 15th verses with the 10th, as the advocates of the common notion do, and thus making lost men—*all* the lost—to be tormented for ever and ever, *because* the Devil is, the above conclusion is inevitable. And then, indeed, ‘clouds and darkness,’ but of another kind than we have heretofore affirmed, are round about the throne of the Eternal, fearfully hiding the ‘righteousness and judgment’ which we are sure must constitute the foundation thereof.

I thank God, who righteously requires the *love* of my whole heart, that, in his blessed revelation, there is nothing akin to what I find in human books, to make my religion one of terror rather than of reverent affection, reversing the apostle’s declaration, and making perfect horror to cast out love. And I would implore my fellow christians, to re-examine for themselves the statements of that thrice and four times blessed book, from which too many derive their ideas



only at second hand, and through fallible and oftentimes grievously mistaken interpreters.

## MATT. xvi. 25-26.

For whosoever will save his *life* [τὴν ψυχὴν] shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his *life* [ψυχὴν] for my sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *soul*? [ψυχὴν] for what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*? [ψυχῆς]

## MARK viii. 35-37.

For whosoever will save his *life* [ψυχὴν] shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his *life* [ψυχὴν] for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *soul*? [ψυχὴν] Or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*? [ψυχῆς]

The one thing to which I invite attention here is that our translators have differently rendered a word which occurs four times in two verses. Twice they say 'life,' twice 'soul.' And hence, to the english reader, the passage would convey an idea somewhat different from that which it would do if the word *ψυχὴν* had been uniformly rendered. There is no reason for twice translating that word 'soul,' in the last verse, which they had just before twice translated 'life.' Since our blessed Lord saw fit to use one and the same word four times in the same connection, and same sentence even, is it not every way desirable to make this sameness manifest in the translation?

Then the case stands thus. Christ had intimated to his disciples the sufferings and death which were before him. This they could not receive. They were not prepared for it. And the strongly impulsive Peter replied—'Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.' From the tenor of the Saviour's reply, it would seem that this reluctance of the disciples to entertain the notion of their Master's ignominious end, arose partly out of a secret and unexpressed dread of the result to themselves, if he should be successfully smitten down by the hand of persecution. Our Lord, therefore, as was sometimes his wont, replied rather to their secret fears than their spoken words, and assures them that his true followers would have to bear the cross. It is in this connection our text occurs; where he teaches them that if any one should seek to prolong his life by unworthy concessions, by the abandonment of his cause, for instance, he would ultimately lose it altogether. Christ,

the only dispenser of life, would disown him as a follower at the great day; the consequence of which would be that he would emphatically lose it. But that if a disciple out of strong attachment to truth and holiness, out of love to Christ should be ready to sacrifice life itself in his cause, such a one, though his life might be cut short on earth, should nevertheless find it. The Prince of Life would acknowledge him as a friend and follower, and give him to drink of the water of life and partake of an endless existence. On this he founds a most impressive appeal. For what would it profit a man to gain by apostacy a little prolongation of his days on earth, or to gain, if it were possible, the whole world, and then absolutely lose life, itself?

The consistency and coherence of the entire passage require a uniform rendering of the chief term, on which the assertion and appeal are made to hinge. 'What man is he that desireth life and loveth many days,' who by a powerful instinct of his nature craveth life and length of days, even for ever and ever, let him cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart, let him faithfully adhere to him through evil report and good report, and through the direst storms of persecution, for in Christ is life, and laying hold of him we lay hold on eternal life. Whatever bearing this passage then has upon the subject, is entirely in our favor, conveying the idea of a forfeiture of existence to those who do not continue to the end the true disciples of Christ.

§ MATTHEW iii. 10-12. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Here the forerunner of the Messiah inquires of the Pharisees and Sadducees 'who had warned them to flee from the wrath to come.' Let this phrase, the first time we meet with it in the new testament, be observed. In continuing to speak on this awful theme, the preacher, comparing the people to trees, asserts that 'every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'

Then, affirming the superiority to himself of the Messiah, just ready to appear, he asserts that 'He will baptize with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.' By which we are led, by all the circumstances and by the context, to understand that Christ will purify some by his Spirit, and will visit others, who resist the Holy Ghost, with judgment, or fire. A sentiment more plainly taught in the next verse, where those that are baptized with the Holy Ghost are set forth as 'his wheat,' which he carefully gathers safe into 'his garner.' While the incorrigibly sinful, being as worthless as 'chaff,' which no one would care to preserve, are set forth under this significant emblem. And it is asserted that the 'chaff' shall be burned up with unquenchable fire.'

Now most undeniably the idea suggested by chaff being cast into the fire, is that of completest destruction. Chaff, cast into fire for its worthlessness, and remaining there unconsumed, would be a miracle indeed. And the idea is so incongruous that, out of the region of controversial theology, no one would for a moment entertain it. Besides, *John* says of the chaff that it is to be 'burned up.' This, so far as this passage is concerned, ought to settle the matter. But divines will not have it so. And they say the chaff is to be cast into the fire indeed, but is not to be consumed at all! And so with the trees that bring not forth good fruit; they also are to be cast into the fire, but are not by any means to be burned up; they are to be for ever burning, but never burned! And the word 'unquenchable' is made to sustain the theory. But surely this word, used in reference to chaff, ought to convey the idea that the devouring flame should not be quenched till it had consumed the material cast into it; and in relation to which alone it is called unquenchable. Just as, in the passage already quoted from *Isaiah*, it is said of Edom, 'The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land shall become burning pitch; that *shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever.*

How like is this terrific strain, on which we have already remarked, to the language of the new testament, in figuratively describing the future lot of the wicked. The reader will kindly pardon a repetition which our present text calls for, and will observe how manifestly it is used simply to set forth the idea of utter and permanent destruction (as

a country, that is) and nothing more. For first, so far from the land becoming 'burning pitch which should never be quenched,' it was not destroyed by fire at all. And then, in the very verse which says, 'it shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever,' it is also said, 'from generation to generation *shall it lie waste*; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.' And in the next verse, 'But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it, the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it,' &c. a quite sufficient proof that the figure was used, as already intimated, to denote complete and permanent destruction.

Or, since new testament language may possibly carry more conviction, we may refer to the strain of the apostle Jude, who says, verse 7, that 'Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*' But certainly those cities are not burning now, for the waves of the Dead Sea roll over them in gloomy silence. But inasmuch as the fire from heaven, which fell upon them, utterly destroyed them, never again to be rebuilt, it is called 'eternal fire.' That is, fire, not eternal in itself, but in its effects.

And under our present text we may include the various parabolic allusions, nearly all of which look the same way. Thus Matt. xiii. 30 and 40—42, where the wicked are represented as tares cast into a furnace to be burned up, because utterly worthless. It is true we here meet with the frequent assertion that 'there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' But this does not lend the slightest countenance to the doctrine of eternal torment. How long the unhappy victims of their own accursed folly will be suffering the consequences of their fatal choice, ere the final catastrophe, who can say? But while consciousness lasts, their wailing will be fearful enough. But let the reader observe that the tares are sooner or later to be burned up. It is for this that they are cast into the furnace.

The same remark applies to the next parable, Matt. xiii. 47—50, which compares the kingdom of God to a net which gathered both sorts of fish. Ultimately, the bad were cast away, because of their worthlessness—thrown into fire to be consumed and got rid of.

It is the same result which is brought out in another assurance of our Lord. Matt. xxi. 44. 'And whosoever



shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.' Just as the falling of an immense block of granite would crush all life out of the unhappy man whose folly should bring it down upon him, so would opposition to Christ the great corner stone of God's spiritual temple, bring down swift destruction on the rash and guilty offender.

So also in another parable, Matt. xxiv. 45—51, the unfaithful servant is represented as 'cut asunder;' as in Luke xix. 27, the sentence which the King pronounces on those who had refused allegiance is, 'Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay before me.'

But all such images as these,—trees burned up—chaff consumed—tares and worthless fish cast into a furnace—a heavy stone grinding a man to powder—a rebellious servant being cut asunder—enemies being slain, &c. &c. will fairly set forth nothing but absolute destruction, and would seem to be by no means adapted to convey the idea of eternal survivance in misery.

Nor do any of the slightly different class of parables countenance the common doctrine of perpetual torment. For consider those which represent a faithless servant, or a guest unsuitably arrayed, or wedding attendants whose carelessness made them too late in their arrival,—as left or cast into outer darkness. What is the explanation? Every one knows it. We are to conceive of magnificent apartments, where costliest preparations are made for a sumptuous banquet. The torches blaze on high. All is brilliancy and life. From the feast and mirth, however, the unworthy servant, and the rude discourteous guest, are excluded. Where are they then? Without;—in the dark streets. The gloom of night involves them, and the cold air chills them, while all is joy and gaiety within. This is the picture. The excluded are weeping with mortification and disappointment and vexation, while they pine and shiver in the cold, and are destitute of the good things provided.

All know this is the basis. But what is there to favor the notion that this weeping and wailing shall never cease? No more than there is to support the idea that in the actual scenes, which might have served our Lord for the parable, the excluded guests wept and raged for ever. The fact is, there is no addition to duration at all; none to the continu-

ance of the lament, none to the cessation. And as of course I do not adduce this parable as favoring the doctrine of the present work, so neither can the popular advocates fairly quote it as countenancing their notion.

A similar remark applies to the parable of Dives. Our Lord shows an ungodly man in a state of wretchedness after death. How long it would last is not intimated. It is true there was no hope for him. He could not buoy himself up with the prospect of restoration to enjoyment. But whether that torment should endure for ever, or would ultimately destroy him, the parable does not intimate. It teaches a terrible and hopeless state for the wicked after death, and that is all.

And so these somewhat different parables do not in the least degree interfere with those others which do plainly intimate a positive result, and that—absolute destruction.

§ The fact is, all the new testament passages on the subject arrange themselves under three separate heads.

The *First* class includes all those which affirm there will be tribulation and anguish, without any reference either to eternal duration, or to cessation, whether by recovery or destruction. So that on all those which fall under this first division, there is no dispute. The orthodox, the restorationist, and myself, can with equal propriety use them in our appeals to sinners. And had there been no other statements given in the scriptures, the question—What will become of the wicked, ultimately? must have been an open one.

The *Second* class of texts comprises the few which at first sight, and prior to that examination which on all doctrines we must give to God's book if we wish rightly to understand it, seem to favor the orthodox view. But on these, it is submitted, first, that they do not necessarily convey the idea of eternal torment. That is, that a fair exegesis does not bring out this interpretation as the fair and inevitable one. Secondly, that while some of them, when examined as we think impartially, do not fairly warrant the common belief at all; others of them, as Matt. xxv. 46, for instance, leave the final result to be determined by other parts of scripture.

The *Third* class consists of those numerous texts which either literally affirm, or metaphorically teach, the doctrine

of this book. "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." They are chaff, and tares, which are to be burned up—they are to perish like brute beasts—they are like meteors which disappear in the blackness of darkness for ever—they are to be ground to powder—sawn asunder—to lose their life—utterly to perish—to die—to suffer the second death—to be punished with everlasting destruction, &c. &c.

We take then what we deem the only fair idea of these passages. And we do it, first, because we recognise with all the orthodox, the imperativeness of the literal and obvious sense, wherever it will stand. And we submit that it will stand in reference to our present subject. We do it, secondly, because the interpretation of all the other parts of scripture, that are either immediately or indirectly, closely or remotely, connected with the subject, becomes more thoroughly consistent on this view, than on that which unhappily prevails in the evangelical churches generally. We do it, thirdly, because so many lines of scripture argument conduce to this one point, and, to our minds, shut us up to the conclusion. And, fourthly, having, first of all, derived it from the only authoritative source of information in reference to the future, we find it every way more consonant with our inevitable idea of righteousness than is the orthodox view, and altogether more calculated beneficially to affect the minds of men. But we may with most advantage pursue these reflections in another chapter.

It will, however, be an act of injustice to us, if any of our opponents shall affirm that we first of all presumed to decide what ought, or ought not, to be the proceedings of the court of heaven, and that then we set ourselves to maintain it from the scriptures. To say this, would be entirely to misrepresent the order of our convictions. We first derived the idea from "the lively oracles," and then rejoiced to find how truly their decision is echoed by the judgment and the conscience; to which we find God himself so frequently making an appeal on the righteousness of his proceedings; 'Are not my ways just and equal? saith the Lord.' Yea, verily, 'just and true are thy ways, O thou King of Saints!'

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

---

**OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.**—I. That destruction is not necessarily an evil—II. That sin deserves never-ending punishment—III. That the proposed theory diminishes the value of the soul, and consequently of salvation—IV. That it weakens the power of religion over the conscience—V. That it has an unfavorable aspect on the doctrine of atonement—VI. And is incompatible with the doctrine of degrees of punishment—VII. Minor objections—Result.

Against the doctrine submitted in these pages many very grave objections are urged, to which the most serious and respectful attention on my part is unquestionably due. And indeed it has been anxiously given. For it is no light thing, on any subject, to differ from the great body of religious men, one's brethren in the faith and hope of the gospel. And especially is it a solemn thing to seek to modify the faith of the evangelical church, on one of the most important articles it has so generally held. And I have no wish to disguise that, as this is the tendency of these pages, so indeed it is solicitously my object. Well then may I deeply feel the almost overwhelming responsibility of my position. If indeed my views are in harmony with the mind of the Spirit, nothing but good can be the ultimate result of my labors. But if otherwise, then, alas! I shall have done precisely that which, above everything else, I would the most sensitively shrink from. For my very highest ambition is, in some humble measure, to serve the cause of truth.

Let me, therefore, calmly meet some of the more important objections that have been advanced against the views stated in this volume. Only premising, however, that christians are professedly satisfied to receive as truth whatever they find in the sacred scriptures, whether they



can silence the cavils, or meet the difficulties, that may be raised thereagainst, or not. And so, on our great evangelical principles, if scripture teach the 'miserable destruction' of the impenitent, it sufficeth us. 'We walk by faith.' Idle as the dash of the waves against the rock-bound shore, are all objections to any doctrine that really comes to us with the authority of revelation.

Nevertheless, while we admit no weight in anything urged against the manifest testimony of scripture, yet if the arguments advanced against what we believe to be the truth of God's word can be satisfactorily met, it may assist to guide into the 'more excellent way,' some of those who propose them with the same honest intentions that we desire ourselves to cultivate.

### I.

§ It is urged that the cessation of existence is not necessarily an evil;—that it may even be a blessing indeed;—and, under some circumstances, the greatest of all possible blessings.

In order however to do full justice to this objection, it shall be stated as given by the writer of the most powerful paper against our views that has yet appeared. Again I refer to my unknown friend in the *Eclectic*, whose language is as follows.

"To this it is obvious to object, that cessation of being is not necessarily, or in all cases, an evil. If all opportunity have been lost of rendering existence happy, and more especially if a course has been pursued which insures irrecoverable misery, the cessation of existence, so far from being a calamity, is the greatest relief and benefit which, in the circumstances, is possible. These, however, are precisely the circumstances of ungodly men. So that God is, by our author's opinion, brought forward in the majesty of his wrath, to denounce against ungodly men as a terrific punishment what actually is, to them, the greatest possible good. Mr. Dobney himself, indeed, must clearly regard the extinction of the wicked in the light of a kindness, since he evidently looks upon it with complacency, as assigning a limit to suffering otherwise without end, and as mitigating the too awful doctrine of endless punishment."

Now to this it may be replied, that all the seeming force of it arises from unallowably confounding the present and future states. It is here and now, that God threatens,

as a fearful punishment, that he will by a terrible act of his justice blot out of being the incorrigibly impenitent. And he threatens in order to reclaim. And most assuredly the prospect of a miserable destruction hereafter, is not precisely 'the greatest possible good' that the sinner can set before himself to be attained to. But to be wholesomely alarmed by the threatening, and to flee for refuge to the cross, and, 'by patient continuance in well doing, to seek for glory and honor and immortality,' would be an infinitely greater 'possible good,' than an awful destruction by a second dying.

But if we may compare great things with small, and spiritual realities with things of earth, we may adopt an illustration to the point. A hardened criminal might possibly prefer hanging to transportation for life, as putting him at once out of his wretchedness. But would it therefore be just to say, when, though by way of deterring from crime, law threatens death as the punishment for the highest crimes, that "it comes forward in all its majesty, to denounce as a terrific punishment, what is actually, to the criminal [in his own view at least, and this is the point] the greatest possible good!"

Here and now, the sinner does not, when he thinks, conceive of a miserable dying out of existence, and a passing, by he knows not what horrid process, into dark nothingness, as "the greatest possible good." When he *thinks*, he is appalled at the prospect; as well he may be. What is this second death, which, unless I turn to God, I must undergo? How long shall I be awaiting in shivering suspense the close of my guilty and miserable career—What horrid sights and sounds will fill me with unutterable terror—In what ghastly forms will the ministers of divine justice at last appear—And amid what torments, becoming fiercer and yet more fierce, shall I finally expire—Oh! wretched man that I am, what must I do to be saved from the wrath to come?

Why if I had represented the sinner as gently breathing out his life, as the flowers close their petals at set of sun, sinking deliciously into soft repose as on a bed of roses, one could not have said more than that it was "the greatest possible good" he was capable of receiving!

Nor does it appear to me quite fair to say "Mr. Dobney himself indeed must clearly regard the extinction of the

wicked *in the light of a kindness,*" &c. This may answer a purpose, may assist to throw an air of improbability and absurdity round the doctrine I think taught in scripture, but can scarcely serve the cause of truth. For, further, it proceeds on an assumption which, as it seems to me, has no foundation in any scripture assertion, and which is this—That God might with perfect justice keep these wretched criminals in existence for ever on purpose to torment them; and, indeed, that without his interference they would naturally thus survive in misery, but that he in pity puts an end to their woe by kindly destroying them; as we humanely crush the wounded insect in order to put it out of its misery.

Will the reviewer, then, affirm that every sinner deserves to suffer an infinite amount of punishment? Deserves, that is, to be sustained in being through eternal ages, in order to be permeated at every pore with as intensely exquisite anguish as he can possibly endure. For unless he will affirm this, he may not affirm that to blot him out of existence is a kindness, inasmuch as it withdraws him from misery which else would justly continue. If the destruction of the sinner may be represented "*in the light of a kindness,*" it can be so exhibited only on the principle that justice might sternly exact the endless prolongation of his torment.

But if my respected opponent will not affirm this, he ought not to say that the punitive destruction of the wicked at some future period is regardable as an act of kindness. And this naturally brings us to another point of the present argument; which however we may more advantageously consider under the head of a distinct objection, so that a further reply to this will be found in the next section.

## II.

§ It is affirmed then, in opposition to the doctrine of this work, that sin is so unutterably vile, that the sinner deserves in consequence to suffer everlasting woe.

Of course if scripture teach this, we will believe and affirm and defend it, and if need be, die for it, as readily as any of our brethren. But we do not remember that scripture has anywhere affirmed this. If it be alleged to be the doctrine of scripture at all, it is only inferentially that it is derived therefrom. It may seem indeed to many

minds a fair and necessary deduction. But this is another thing. Human deductions from the word of God, are not to be confounded with the infallible testimony itself. Every word of God is true. But every deduction therefrom by man's reason is not necessarily true. It may be true, or it may not. This reasoning process must be tested in the same way as any other. I have said that my memory does not present me with any testimony of scripture to the effect that every sinner deserves to suffer never-ending torment. But the orthodox affirm that every sinner does thus deserve.

And so our present question is,—whether, supposing scripture not to affirm this, an enlightened reason would adopt it as a sound and necessary principle?

For many preachers and writers show themselves solicitous, and very naturally and properly so, to demonstrate that the infinite torment, which they consider to be threatened in scripture, is not only necessarily just, because inflicted by a just God, so that it must be equitable whether we can discern the justice thereof or not;—but that in itself it is consonant with reason. They adduce, not merely supposed biblical evidence, which is the very thing wanted, but, with a laudable anxiety to harmonise the alleged doctrine of revelation with reason, they attempt to reason out the propriety of eternal sufferings on account of sin. It is to this last endeavor that we now turn our attention. And I hope to show, not that reason opposes revelation on this subject, so that we must modify the language of scripture, but that, seeing as we believe the language of scripture has been extensively misapprehended, reason does most rigidly approve of just that decision which lies in what we deem the true sense of scripture. Or, at all events, that reason on this point is not with our opponents.

I am exceedingly anxious, however, not to be misunderstood here, and must beg the reader's indulgence therefore if I should be guilty of a little repetition, in order to prevent misapprehension. The case then is this—There are two theories extant, both of them professing to be rigidly drawn from scripture alone, and both of them, after presenting the alleged testimony of scripture, fortifying their respective interpretations by endeavoring to show that reason favors the conclusions they had already biblically reached. So that both parties quitting the field of revelation, triumphant in their own estimation, meet again on



other ground, and resume the conflict with other weapons. And thus it would be grossly unfair to charge either with disparaging or superseding the testimony of scripture; much less with opposing it; seeing that each supposes scripture to teach the view which reason also favors. And now, the ground being clear, let the case be fairly stated. And let reason give her best attention, and her most transparently impartial verdict, assured that her decision will undergo a severe revision, and that the case will be again moved into a higher court.

That case then is this. There is abroad a dogma which makes the Creator keep in the dungeons of the tormentor, for ever and ever, countless multitudes of his creatures; who, according to the almost universal belief, were brought into being with a fearfully deteriorated nature, depravity somehow inhering in them from their very birth. From the earliest dawn of reason, and while not yet accountable beings, or such only in the faintest degree, they were at every moment surrounded by powerful and too well adapted temptations to evil. So that long before their minds could fairly open to the force of the motives to good, wrong tastes and habits were formed, and had gathered strength; and thus their original bias to evil became terribly confirmed.—Moreover, being corrupt even by nature, they were formed so utterly averse from God and holiness—not to advert to the strength which evil had silently acquired during their earlier years, when it besieged them more sedulously than good—that it was absolutely certain they never would turn to God (and some allege that they even *could not*) unless their minds were graciously disposed to do so, by a direct influence specially exerted on them by the Holy Spirit. But this essential and indispensable influence, which alone draws any heart to God, was not vouchsafed to them. So that, as a matter of course, they remained unaffected by all the threatenings and invitations of the gospel, and died in their sins, with their guilt fearfully aggravated by the rejection of the glad tidings of salvation.

I think it must be allowed that so far from having exaggerated the calvinistic view, it is somewhat mildly stated, for many who hold it present it more repulsively under the idea of exalting the sovereignty of God. Nor can the admirer of arminian theology exult over his calvinistic

brethren, as though he really avoided the doctrine which he deems so obnoxious. He does no more than remove the difficulty one step farther off, and has not dispelled but only slightly concealed it. We will not, however, press the case in this form, though we might fairly insist on it; we will waive the right, which with many of our opponents, we should undoubtedly possess. Let them have every advantage, for our object is not victory but truth. Let the case then be modified as each reader pleases, and let it stand briefly thus;—A host of sinners are charged with a whole life of sin, and are utterly without one extenuating circumstance that they can plead; conscious-stricken they are speechless.

Now the popular doctrine is, that these multitudes of God's creatures exist as long as God himself exists, throughout ages that when they have outnumbered all the atoms of all worlds are, as compared with eternity, less than nothing and vanity; and that their existence is thus protracted by God (for it is granted that creatures exist only by his upholding power) drawn out, on and on—for ever and ever, in order that they may suffer, as the due reward of their deeds, an eternity of torment. And it is said this is taught in scripture.

I reply that I do not find this statement in **THE BOOK**; but that its universal testimony is that the wicked—those who persist in counteracting the very design of their creation, and who will not be reclaimed to God and holiness and happiness—shall be destroyed; they are “vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.” Thus they lose a whole eternity of well being, which they might have secured; their whole intellectual and moral being is filled with the terrible consciousness that they have made themselves obnoxious to the displeasure of the ever blessed God, their Creator and Benefactor, who would have all men to be saved; while they cannot relieve their burdened conscience by throwing the blame on their first progenitor, nor by impeaching the justice or even the benevolence of the arrangements amid which they had passed their probation. They might have been saved, and so might have exulted throughout the ages of eternity in their relation to the Most High, in their ever growing faculties, their glorious companions, their sublime employments, and their overflowing cup of bliss. But now they have received from the All-merciful Judge,

who had so loved a guilty race as to die for them, the awful sentence of condemnation to the SECOND DEATH; and in unutterable anguish of mind, amid weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, await the execution of the penalty in all the terrible fulness of its meaning.

And so believing this to be the doctrine of scripture, my respected reviewer deems himself at liberty to represent me as “regarding it *in the light of a kindness!*” They shall receive, scripture says, according to their deeds, Justice shall preside over the place of punishment. But because, so far as mere power goes, God *could*—has the power—to make their doom still more terrible, by prolonging it to all eternity, is it therefore “an act of kindness” *not* to inflict what, so far indeed as the mere possession of power is concerned, he *could* inflict of the more dreadful, but what is not taught in scripture, nor can be independently thereof shown by reason, to be justly due to sin, however aggravated, and although sin is unutterably evil?

Will my reviewer affirm that God does absolutely inflict on every sinner as much misery as he possibly can heap upon his devoted head? Because if not, by how much God withholds of what he could do, by so much is even this withholding ‘an act of kindness,’ on the principle which the critic recognises; and unless it be conceded that justice itself does not require omnipotence eternally to operate to make the sinner as wretched as he can possibly be made. For if justice requires that every sinner shall for ever and ever be made as intensely miserable, as full of torment and anguish, as it is possible for the Almighty to make him,—I say if justice demands this, then must the reviewer affirm that this is done, or else even he also must admit “an act of kindness.”

Supposing him then to reject the idea of kindness, he casts himself on the justice of the proceeding, affirming that there is no mercy, and that equity alone upon the judgment seat rules the hour. And thus we come to the point proposed above—Does reason, since it is agreed at all events to hear her verdict, does reason decide that endless misery is the due reward of sin committed upon earth? for the believers in endless torment affirm that it is.

I deeply regret that the present line of argument, forced upon me by the popular belief, compels me even to seem

to represent sin as less awful. But this is one of the evil consequences which grow out of the exaggerations of the orthodox; and in repelling their assertions one is unable to avoid laying one's self open to a charge—though not just—of seeming to diminish the real evil of sin. But the candid will not mistake me, and it is to them that I submit my remarks.

§ The once favorite common-place argument—that sin is an infinite evil, because committed against an infinite being, is now nearly exploded, as indeed it ought to be. For if an act contrary to God's will have infinite demerit, deriving its quality of infinite, not from the agent who does it, but from the being against whom it is done, there would of course be infinite merit in an act performed in harmony with his will; this action also deriving its quality of infinite from the being for whom it was done. But as the idea of any creature meriting an infinite reward from God would be absurd, the idea of infinite demerit in an act that was contrary to him must be abandoned too; seeing that by whatever standard we judge the acts of one man, we must have the same standard for the actions of all men. And unless therefore infinite merit be allowed on the one hand, infinite demerit must be disallowed on the other. I conclude, then, that to say sin is an infinite evil, and therefore deserving of infinite punishment, because committed against an infinite being, is false; for this reason among several, that to attribute infinity of value to the act of a finite agent, is an outrage on all reason.

Further. It is scriptural as well as reasonable to affirm that there are degrees of guilt. All wrong actions are not equally vile, and all sinners are not equally wicked. Which common sense view revelation authenticates by teaching degrees of punishment. The guilt of an agent is in proportion to his amount of knowledge, &c., and does not derive its degree simply from the being against whom committed. Or else, every sin would be infinitely heinous, because committed against an infinite being, and every sinner infinitely wicked. In which case there could be no degrees of demerit, since it would be absurd to predicate degrees of what is infinite. But there are degrees of wickedness; and therefore sin is not an infinite evil; and consequently not deserving of infinite punishment, on that account at all events.



Again, since it must be conceded there are degrees of wickedness, no one can truly say that a single sin—say the smallest one conceivable—deserves infinite suffering. But if one sin do not merit infinite suffering, no number of sins can be affirmed to merit infinite suffering; because no number of finites—and each sin taken separately is of finite demerit—can make an infinite. So that an opponent ought to affirm that one sin deserves infinite punishment; which contradicts scripture as well as reason, both affirming degrees; whereas degrees are inadmissible where infinity is predicable. As an infinitely wise being cannot become wiser, or an infinitely holy being become holier, so an infinitely guilty creature cannot become guiltier. The admission, therefore, of degrees of criminality, is fatal to the assertion of desert of infinite misery; and the denial of degrees of guilt, not only contradicts scripture, but is a palpable absurdity.

§ And the assertion that is commonly made when the popular advocates try to gain the verdict of reason, namely, that though sin is not an infinite evil, and not deserving of infinite punishment, and therefore no number of sins—yet that so long as the sinner continues to sin, so long justice may righteously continue to punish, is in reality an evasion of the whole difficulty. For the orthodox doctrine represents a man condemned on the judgment day to everlasting misery *for the deeds already done* in the body. The sentence is not passed prospectively, in anticipation of sins to be committed perpetually hereafter. But when the sinner stands at the judgment seat, to be dealt with according to what he has been, he is then and there doomed for his past misdeeds. This is the testimony of scripture, and I do earnestly beseech my brethren to ponder it well.

But to pass on. The plea, that in the future world men will be punished for sin then sure to be eternally persisted in, is in reality an abandonment of the whole case; which is shown in two ways. For, first, it is a concession that the sins of earth and time do not, in the eye of reason, merit endless misery, which is precisely what I affirm, and so the advocate, who makes it, surrenders his case. And secondly, this necessary persistence in sin is itself represented as part of the penal consequences of having sinned on earth. And so, being itself penal, a part of the punishment absolutely threatened to the sinner, (for orthodoxy

makes perpetual sinfulness to constitute one element in the death threatened to the sinner) it must, after all, since the sinner is everlastingly shut up to it in consequence of his sins in time, be resolved into punishment for the deeds done in the body; which, by the very adoption of this line of defence are admitted not to deserve, so far as reason can see, infinite misery. And thus before the bar of reason the case utterly breaks down.

### III.

§ It is alleged that the view suggested in this work diminishes the value of the soul, and consequently of salvation.

And in order that full justice may be done to this objection, I again quote from the Eclectic.

“If, however, it is conceived by any persons that the notion of a limited, though prolonged, infliction of suffering on the ungodly does materially diminish the awfulness of their doom, as represented by the doctrine of eternal punishment, it should be observed that the value of the soul and of salvation must be diminished in an equal degree. Eternity is the source from which some of the most solemn and weighty considerations are drawn in relation to religious concerns. Attend to the interests of the soul, *for it will live for ever*; prepare for the life to come, *for it will be everlasting*; flee from the wrath of God, *for it will never end*—these are instances of the manner in which the element of eternity mingles itself with religious thoughts and exhortations. If its withdrawal from them is conceived so greatly to lessen the awfulness of an impenitent sinner’s doom that it may be contemplated calmly by a good man, is it not manifest that the same process may justify the apathy of a bad one? If its power to harrow up the soul of the former be lost, how is it to retain its adaptation to awaken the conscience of the latter?”

To which several answers may be given. And it is obvious to remark,—1. That, however the reviewer may represent the value of the soul and of salvation as diminished, the value of both, even on our view, surpasses our highest comprehension. The preceding pages have necessarily shown how terrific is the prospect of the second death; while the glory, honor, and immortality to all the saved, are precisely the same in each theory, with this additional weight in our scale,—that we represent Christ as the bestower of that immortality, which the orthodox believe the saint has independently of the Saviour. But to exhibit

the Prince of Life as constituting ‘a great multitude which no man can number,’ the heirs of an eternal existence, which he also fills with ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory,’ is, it is submitted, quite sufficient to restore the balance, and to magnify the salvation of the gospel as thoroughly as the popular scheme does. Or if not, it exalts the redemption that is in Christ as highly as the scriptures do; which is quite as much as the writer of these pages cares to accomplish. To conceive of Christ as bestowing immortality on those who had it not, and then filling that eternity with lofty gladness, is surely to conceive as highly of him as to deem that he delivers from an eternity of wretchedness, and converts that misery into joy. And the objection looks as though it were in reality intended to serve as an outwork of defence to another doctrine, namely, that of the atonement, and were chiefly valuable as such. In relation to which we will presently consider it.

But, 2.—As to the most ‘weighty considerations,’ &c. when the reviewer says, “attend to the interests of the soul, *for it will live for ever*; prepare for the life to come, *for it will be everlasting*,” he adopts a strain which, though very common, is utterly unlike any that the inspired teachers of Christianity adopt, and one which he has learnt not from heaven but of men. For, to the best of my remembrance, there is not one such exhortation in all the new testament. And had there been, he would have quoted it just there. But on the contrary the strain is this, ‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and *lose his own soul*.’ [*ψυχή* life.—See page 234.]

And 3.—As to our view being such as to be “contemplated calmly by a good man,” and therefore “justifying the apathy of a bad one;” I know not, nor can I picture to myself, the good man who can contemplate it calmly, if by calmness is meant, as it would seem, indifference, something analogous to the apathy of the bad man. The thought of it thrills my own soul with terror. And what impartial reader of the present work, or even of the former which the reviewer was examining, will deem my Eclectic friend to act with fairness in representing the miserable destruction of the wicked as something which if true would “*justify their apathy!*” Let me be pardoned if I express the hope that the common arts of controversy will not be brought into the discussion of so grave a question. But because

this objection is one of the most frequent, I shall examine it separately.

#### IV.

§ It is objected, then, that to do away with the doctrine of endless torment, by substituting that presented in these pages, would be to weaken most alarmingly the power of the gospel over men's consciences ;—that it would fearfully diminish the wholesome fear which chiefly restrains men from wickedness, and urges them to embrace a Saviour ;—and that it would thus promote irreligion, and throw open the flood-gates of licentiousness.

*How* the doctrine here advocated would in the nature of things accomplish all this mischief, has not been argumentatively shown. Those who have urged it have seemed to think it self-evident, or that their assertion is decisive. We may be allowed to remind them however of the distinction between declamation and argument. And assuredly we feel no very deep mortification when we observe that on this point, at all events, the former is commonly selected by our opponents, and the latter quietly abandoned to us. And we very cheerfully meet this objection by a reference to philosophy and fact,—the philosophy, that is, of human nature, and the facts wherewith christendom abounds.

Let us first, however, look at their case as stripped of its disguise. They who affirm that it is dangerous to the interests of religion, to deny the eternity of hell torment, and is calculated to confirm men in their neglect of God, and to encourage them to persist in sin—are bound in all consistency to consent to the following exposition of their views.

Their objection really amounts to this—"Less than a whole eternity of misery in prospect, is not sufficient to alarm the sinner. Religion can make no way without this. Christ can never win all hearts, unless his frown can make a night of infinite horror. Hell is nothing terrible to the guilty, however long its anguish may continue, unless that anguish is to be ETERNAL. Make it only a thousand years, for instance, and people will despise it as a matter of course. For what man would ever draw back from a momentary gratification, if there were nothing more



to deter him than the certainty of a hundred years of torment for each transgression? As to destruction—the closing the eye for ever on this fair universe—what reasonable being would ever feel this as a dissuasive from sin, or a motive to flee to Christ? No, we must adhere to the scheme of infinite terror, or there is no hope for the spread of the gospel—absolutely none!

“Vain, comparatively, will be the beauty of a Saviour’s character, the touching condescension of his loving heart, the tears he wept over the impenitent, the anguish of his soul, and the precious blood he so cheerfully shed on their behalf. Vain, comparatively, all the meekness and gentleness of Christ, all the merciful invitations he gave, all the prospects of heavenly happiness wherewith he endeavors to allure. And vain all the declarations of God’s displeasure, all the solemnities of judgment, all the horrors of the sentence of condemnation and the second death. Religion will decrease in our land, and in the world. Men will grow hardened in sin, despite all other motives, if we do not assert that their future torment will be eternally prolonged. The idea of their miserable destruction merely, is therefore subversive of religion, and fatal to men’s interests. It will be comparatively useless to besiege them on the side of their hopes, or to address their affections, or enlist their judgment, or even to arouse their fears, unless a whole infinity of horror be brought to bear upon them.”

This in reality is the sum and substance of one of the commonest objections to our views. And our opponents who avail themselves of it, must in fairness utter themselves thus. But will they do this? Will they do it, when their sentiment is stripped of its disguise, and presented in a common sense form? If they will, whence did they derive their knowledge of human nature, I ask; and with what eyes have they looked on the world around them?

But we spoke just now of facts. Let us glance at our native land. England is, or ought to be, the most religious country under heaven. We say, then, to the objector,—Look around.—In our little island, more than twenty thousand preachers constantly proclaim the doctrine of never-ending torment. It is the creed of the Church of England, the Church of Rome, the Church of Scotland, and the Free Church, the large Wesleyan body, with all the numerous offshoots therefrom, the Congregational body, including its

two sections of Baptists and Pædobaptists, and all the minor sects, with the exception of a handful of men holding the doctrine of restoration, who, being so very few, are scarcely to be accounted of in speaking of the country at large. So that England is emphatically filled with the doctrine of eternal misery.

It has reigned and triumphed here. None have called it in question. It has had a free course and been glorified. All that learning, eloquence, and imagination, sanctified by genuine piety and deep devotion, could do to set forth this doctrine, has been done, and done for centuries. Divines more learned and profound, preachers more earnest and powerful and sincere, no country ever produced. And every pulpit has been a stronghold for the doctrine of never-ending torment, every church and chapel its sanctuary, and every congregation its devoted and zealous body-guard. Yet at this very moment all the religious bodies are deploring, in their periodicals, the fact that not only they do not gain upon the population, but that relatively to the increase of the population they are declining.

But it is not to the condition of the religious bodies themselves that I refer so much. It is to the state of the masses. On these the religious bodies can make little or no impression. There are preachers in every parish and hamlet of our land, and bibles in every house, and tracts circulated by tens of thousands in all directions, and yet vice and irreligion confessedly abound among all classes. How is this? Evidently not for want of a sufficient amount of terror. Our Edwardses among divines, and Polloks among poets, and Melvilles among fashionable declaimers, have almost revelled (if one may be excused the expression, not using it in any offensive sense) in descriptions of never-ending torment. And it is not that, from the crowded church to the Methodist preaching room, there has been any lack of unquenchable fire, and undying worms, and lakes of brimstone, that the mass of the people are careless about their souls.

From their childhood, in our sunday schools, and upward, they have heard about "for ever dying, and yet never dead." The 'wrath of God' and 'eternal damnation' have been profusely dispensed. And yet after an uninterrupted reign for centuries of this doctrine of never-ending misery, vice, to use the every day expression, runs

down our streets like water, And everybody sees that it is so. Let every reader only reflect on the state of his own neighborhood for one serious hour, and he may be appalled.

Yet that christianity teaches the eternity of hell torments, the irreligious never question. They know full well that all the preachers and religious people say so. Put the question where you will,—What does christianity teach of the future condition of the wicked? and from every ale-bench, and every brothel, and every gaol, you will have the reply wherewith orthodoxy has indoctrinated the country. So that I am abundantly entitled to affirm, that the popular belief is comparatively impotent to restrain from sin, and allure to Christ and holiness. To all who reiterate that the idea of unending torment is essential to restrain the sinner, I say—Look around! Where are the masses whom it does restrain? Will the metropolis of “christian England” be adduced? Or, if vice must be expected to stalk in the city, will our rural districts answer the purpose of our objectors? Alas! facts are against them,—all the facts.

We may advance a step. Not only does the scheme of infinite terror fail to impress the popular mind; but what if it should be, that this very dogma has done more to alienate the people from the religion that was affirmed to teach it, than anything else? Look ye, my reader. A man who is quite conscious that he has declined grievously from the right path is told that, unless he repent, &c., he will for ever and for ever lie sweltering in the fire of God’s wrath. Pains are taken to make the future as dreadful as words and imagery can make it. Eternity is attempted to be realised. He is assured that when he has existed in torment as many centuries as there are leaves in the forest, or sand grains on the shore, or atoms in the world, he will even then have only entered on his punishment; and that for ever and for ever more he will writhe in anguish, “for ever dying, and yet never dead!”

Now what is the result? Suppose the listener to be a common sense shrewd sort of man. He instinctively feels, and he perhaps expresses his feeling, that this threatened infinity of torment for the careless sinfulness (for he acknowledges thus much) of a few years, is out of all proportion:—the infinite for the finite! He deems it not

merely unjust, but the bare enunciation of it an outrage on his understanding. And he says so. The speaker departs, confirmed in his crude notions of the malignant depravity that inheres in human nature, and satisfied with his own pious but impotent attempt to reclaim him. The sinner also goes his way, irritated and uneasy. He recalls the conversation; sees again that it cannot be proved to be just to punish him infinitely; and concludes either that this cannot be the doctrine of scripture, or else that the bible cannot be true. Either way he is harmed; and in a moody state of mind he joins his companions, who in loud tones agree that there is injustice in the dogma that "the serious" preach, and that they are not to be listened to.

Now, if christianity do *not* contain this doctrine, as we affirm it does not, with what a fearful curse has orthodoxy blighted that man's soul! God appeals to the people themselves whether his ways are not just and equal; and an apostle 'by manifestation of the truth, commended himself to every man's conscience.'\* But the pious and devoted friend I have supposed, instead of this, does the very reverse; and having alienated the sinner still further from God, endeavors to relieve his pious and praiseworthy solicitude by pillowing his head on some other doctrine of his faith; and original sin, or human depravity, or the sovereignty of grace and the inscrutable mysteries of providence, or election, will come to his aid. Whereas that man had a heart, if the speaker had only known the secret way to it. It was not barred at every portal. And he had a conscience too, slumbering it may be, but able to be awakened, if only he had known how to lay a kindly hand upon it. Oh yes—

"The darkest night that shrouds the sky,  
Of beauty hath a share;  
The blackest heart hath signs to tell  
That God still lingers there."

Speaking in the belief that the popular doctrine is not taught in scripture, I do not hesitate to affirm that anything

\* And after referring to the very vilest, to men 'filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, (Rom. i. 29—31) he



more perfectly adapted to harden men's hearts against God, and hinder them from beginning to think aright of him, could not have been contrived. Its legitimate effects have been most disastrous. Would we seek for the rationale of infidelity, it might to a considerable extent be found in this,—that religious men, having for the most part misapprehended the truth of scripture on this point, have unconsciously and with the best intentions, presented the God of revelation in such a light that his creatures, whom he would fain have addressed through them and won to himself, have been scared at the terrific aspect. "The God whom we are required to love, is a God who, if I continue in sin, will keep me alive for ever and ever in torment, by way of punishment; and this, they say, is the declaration of the bible; then either the bible is not really his word, or else he is fearfully unjust,"—have ejaculated thousands.

By all means proclaim the 'terrors of the Lord,' we say. He would be a traitor to humanity who should refrain. But take heed and not exaggerate the words of truth and soberness. Remember the God you speak of is a righteous God; and while he will not shrink from executing the sentence which calm and unimpassioned justice pronounces, yet never will he exceed this. Human passions belong not to him, nor will his righteous displeasure ever degenerate into revenge.

But it is time we touched on another point of our reply. We referred to the philosophy of human nature, and affirmed that it lent no countenance to the objection of our friends, that the doctrine of infinite terror was indispensable to the maintenance of religion—that if it were abandoned for the theory of ultimate destruction, men would thereby be encouraged to persist in sin;—and that nothing less than the fear of infinite misery would suffice as an adequate motive.

Now, not to press the fact that human governments have uniformly found crime to rise in amount and aggravation in proportion to the severity of the punishment, and to diminish in proportion as the penalty has accorded with the

says, even of these, that *they knew themselves to be worthy of death*. The death *he* threatened to sinners, was a death which even their own consciences confessed them to deserve. Now since such malignant sinners were about the worst possible ones, quite as bad as those of our own day, the popular idea of the threatened death, not commending itself to the conscience, can scarcely be the same.

universal sense of justice; I content myself with asking, on what known principle of our nature a man will be more thoroughly and beneficially affected by an indefinite amount of punishment, which he therefore cannot realise, if that which is more level to his apprehension, and more consonant with his sense of justice, is utterly powerless. On what principle would a man be deterred from any course by the threat of a million years of misery, if he laughed to scorn the threat of a thousand years of punishment? In reference to the hitherto untried, we must be affected to a great extent through the imagination. And that which can be somewhat comprehended and realised, will inevitably be more powerful than that which no effort can avail to grasp. The definite will prevail more than the indefinite.

And if we dared to imagine such a thing, as that it were left to us to represent such future punishment for the impenitent as we deemed most likely to affect them beneficially, I, for one, should represent the sinner who would not return to God, and who therefore could answer no end by his continued existence, as blotted out of being by a solemn and judicial act, in sight of numberless spectators, who would thereby learn what an evil and bitter thing is sin, and how God will by no means clear the guilty. And this, if I mistake not, would prevail more than the scheme of never-ending misery, for these two reasons already suggested; namely, First—that it could be more thoroughly realised, and so would more powerfully affect the mind; and Secondly, and chiefly, inasmuch as the sinner would in the deep recesses of his conscience feel it to be just; and so, instead of being additionally hardened against God, would be the more ready to embrace his message, and seek to love him with all his heart.

On this part of our subject, the reader perhaps may be pleased with an extract from the valuable work of the late Abraham Tucker.—

“Let us suppose then we could know for certain that the duration of future punishment were precisely one thousand years: what encouragement could this give to the sinner? Is not this length far greater than that of any enjoyment he can expect to get by sinning? Let him consider what it is to pass a day, a week, a month, in exquisite tortures, and he will soon find a less time than that we

have specified sufficient to discourage him effectually from running the hazard. Suppose a wicked man talked to by the parson of the parish, who terrifies him with the dread of everlasting flames, into the resolution of amendment. You come in afterwards and bid him not mind the parson, for you know better than all of them put together, and can assure him there is no such thing as everlasting flames. Ay? says the man, I am heartily glad of that, for then I may take my pleasure without fear of an after-reckoning. No, no, you say, I cannot engage for so much neither; you must expect to smart, but it will be but for a while, only a thousand years, and all will be well again. What comfort could this give him? Must it not rather damp his spirits, and the naming so vast a length increase his terrors more than the limitation to that term abate them?

“For both choice and evidence have their certain weight to render them complete: while below this pitch, you may increase them by adding to the weights; but when once arrived at it, all further addition is superfluous. For in moral arithmetic, as observed before under the article of pleasure, the same rules do not hold good as in the common; nor does two and two always make four. If I hear an unlikely fact related by somebody I know little of, I shall not heed him much: if another confirms what he said, I may begin to doubt: two or three more agreeing in the same story may make me think it probable: but if twenty persons of approved honor and veracity assert it upon their own knowledge, I should give an unreserved assent: nor could I do more though a hundred of the same character were to come in. So were a man offered a long life of pleasure for a month’s future sufferings, perhaps he might be stout enough to accept the condition: were they increased to a year, he might hesitate: but were they multiplied to a thousand years, he could not delay his choice a moment, if he had any consideration at all. Where demonstration will not convince, nor things beyond all comparison determine the choice, it proves an insensibility in the mind which no further outward application can cure. If those who hear not Moses and the prophets would not believe though one rose from the dead; neither would he that is not touched with a thousand years of severest punishment, be moved with an eternity. For it is plain the present wholly engrosses his imagination: he has no regard for the future:

and you may as well make a blind man see by lighting up more candles, or a mortified limb, that has utterly lost its sensation, feel by laying on more stripes, as affect him by any future sufferings whatsoever.

“Therefore since a mind that has any feeling of futurity will be filled with as much terror by the length above specified as it is capable of receiving, you cannot lessen the discouragement by paring off what lies beyond: and one that has no sense of anything further than this present life, will not be affected by all you can say concerning a Hereafter; so you cannot lessen the discouragement where there was none. Besides, for a man to pretend he should have paid a due regard to his future state if I had not persuaded him it was finite, would be contradicting himself in the same breath: for why does he make nothing of a limited term, unless because he conceives it fifty or threescore years distant? How absurd then is it to tell me he sets no value upon a reversion after threescore years, yet should value one extremely after a thousand years? He that makes this excuse either is not in earnest or deceives himself egregiously, and only catches hold of a specious argument to cover his thorough attachment to present pleasures. \* \* \* \*

“After all that has been suggested, if any considerate person should happen to come into my notion upon this article, I think he could not be induced thereby to become a whit the less careful of his future concerns: and for the inconsiderate, they are not likely to meddle with my speculations. But if any of them should be hurt, it may be attributed to the common practice of expatiating with all the powers of oratory upon the word eternal; which carries a tacit implication, that if punishment were not eternal, it would not be worth minding. This seems to be inuring men never to stir unless upon the strongest inducement: perhaps it might be more expedient to bring them into a habit of answering the gentlest call of judgment. It has been remarked that a trader never grows rich who despises little gains: and it might as justly be said, that a man never grows happy or prudent who despises little advantages, although large enough to be visible. The mind has been often compared to a fine balance, and we know the excellence of a balance lies in its turning with a hair: so the excellence of judgment lies in discerning the minutest



difference; and the excellence of disposition, in pursuing measures readily upon view of the slightest preference.” *The Light of Nature pursued, &c.* Vol. i. p. 653-4.

But it is time we passed on to consider another objection already hinted at, namely,—

—V.

§ That the idea of a literal destruction being the doom of the impenitent, has an untoward aspect on the doctrine of the atonement.

Thus writes the Eclectic Reviewer.—

“The salvation of the soul is the object and result of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The expiatory offering of the Son of God is a mystery at least as great as any involved in the doctrine of eternal punishment; and the awe which a serious contemplation of it is adapted to produce passes into actual pain, unless we take some grand and awful view of the object which was to be effected by it. To think of the eternal Father slaying his well beloved Son *for any purpose* is amazing; but to think of his doing so for a slight one is altogether appalling and impossible. The immortality of the soul stands in the fullest harmony with the vastness of the price that was paid for its redemption, and the eternity of future punishment with the infinite costliness of the ransom. It would afford a devout heart little satisfaction to adopt a view which would represent the Most Blessed as tender to his rebellious creatures, at the cost of representing him as cruel to his Son.”

Let me be pardoned by the writer if I say that I read this with deep and painful regret. The unutterably glorious fact of an adequate expiation for human guilt, by the mysterious sacrifice of our adorable Redeemer, is ever to be spoken of with reverent lips. And the idea of God’s being represented as “cruel to his Son,” unless all sinners are kept alive through eternity to be tormented, does strike me as unutterably painful. Will my esteemed friend then peril the precious doctrine of atonement, by resting it on the everlasting misery of the sinner, as its only secure and solid basis? Is the atonement of Christ a fiction, unless the eternity of hell torment be a truth?

And is the voluntary death of Christ, which is somewhat unhappily designated God’s ‘slaying his beloved Son,’ an act of cruelty, if the incorrigible are destroyed, notwithstanding ‘a great multitude which no man can number’

‘having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,’ spend a joyous eternity in heaven as the glorious reward of his mediatorial undertaking? Must the ears of the compassionate Redeemer drink in, not merely the songs of the saved, but also the groans of the impenitent through eternal ages, in order that he may not resent his former ignominy as an act of cruelty on the part of the Father? I tremble at the thought.

For if I must express my regret at the strain, which, though I am sure it was well intended, will be acknowledged to be most unhappy, I may also deplore that the writer should have allowed himself to build the fortification of his own position with what, in any less honorable opponent, one would have called the wood, hay, and stubble of misrepresentation. I allude to his exhibiting “the Almighty Father as slaying his beloved Son” for “a *slight*” purpose, if our view be correct; that is, if it were *only* to save innumerable millions of sinners from destruction, and endow them, with immortality, and raise them to heaven, and make them in some bright and glorious spheres of action, kings and priests unto God, rendering them growingly happy as the ages of eternity roll on, so that Christ is everlastingly glorified in them, and the eye of paternal Deity rests on them with ineffable complacency and love.

All this is accomplished by our blessed Saviour “whom having not seen we love, in whom though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” But unless it were unending misery that was originally threatened to man, and unless this be the portion of the lost still—it was “a *slight purpose*,” says the reviewer, for which the Mediator died!

Let me remind the reader that, when we believe the fact of an atonement for sin, we believe it, not because we have first of all reasoned out the propriety of such an amazing procedure in the government of God, but because it is revealed. The scriptures, which we know to be from God, affirm it, to our apprehension, with unmistakable plainness. And as nothing can ever set aside a fact, all reasoning against facts being absurd, nothing else that we find in scripture will shake our confidence in this. And as all facts lie quietly side by side with one another, so, whatever be the fact touching the final destiny of the incorrigible, it cannot in the faintest degree affect the previously ascertained

fact of an atonement. And as a guilty sinner, humbly basing my hopes of heaven on the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I grieve at such a dangerous doctrine as that which I regret being thus compelled to notice. And I beseech my beloved brethren to beware how they snatch up weapons against me, which a common enemy would easily wrench from their hands, and employ exultingly against us both. Let us keep close to a sound philosophy, and hold fast all facts, whether at present we can harmonise them or not. And let us not forget, as child-like disciples, that ours is emphatically “the obedience of faith.”

There is one other objection, which I do not remember to have seen urged, and yet to my own apprehension it is by no means the least important. It is this.—

## VI.

§ That if final destruction be the doom of all the wicked, this sameness of end, involving all alike in one undistinguishable ruin, seems to do away with the scripture doctrine of degrees of punishment. If all are destroyed, all are involved in the same doom.

To my own mind this appears one of the very strongest of all objections to the views suggested in this work. And it is incumbent on me therefore to consider it, although I am not aware that it has been brought forward by any opponent. But our aim is truth.

Let it be admitted as indisputable that there are, as we easily perceive there ought to be, degrees of punishment. How does the theory I suggest provide for this?

Now suppose I answer frankly that I feel some little difficulty here. What then? Are there no difficulties connected with almost everything we believe? We believe on evidence. And evidence may be sufficient to compel belief, even though there may remain some difficulties unexplained. Why do I reject the popular doctrine? Not because of the difficulties in which it is involved. But because, first, I do not find it taught in scripture; and secondly, I think I do find something else taught there very distinctly.

It will be admitted by all who have attentively studied the scriptures, that we often have there grand outlines of

truth, the details of which are reserved. Or, we have vast masses of truth, whose reality is apparent, but the twilight hour of this incipient stage of our existence does not permit us to discern clearly the outlines thereof. "Now we see as through a glass darkly."

One thing however will suggest itself to the reader, on this point, as very obvious. Namely, that it is quite conceivable that the length of time which shall elapse ere the wicked utterly cease to be, and the degree of suffering by which their final dissolution shall be preceded and accompanied, may be exactly proportioned to their various deserts. This idea cannot, at all events, be designated as incomprehensible. Nor is it absurd. And it would meet the case. It would also be in harmony with the universal order of things. There may be latent laws in existence and operation, the natural effect of which would be perfectly to proportion suffering to crime. Many things consonant with this will immediately occur to the mind of the intelligent reader. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

I cannot undertake to affirm that this, to us obvious proceeding, will be the precise mode in which the exceedingly various degrees of criminality will meet their just desert. To the fact of degrees of guilt, we must adhere, And then the consequence is inevitable. The suggestion already made may prove correct. If so, it would perfectly meet the objection.

But now would it not be well just to consider for a moment how the supposed objection affects the popular view? Is it an objection which any advocate of orthodoxy can safely urge against me? Assuredly not. It is a dangerous weapon for orthodoxy to touch. If any of the believers in eternal torment attempt to employ it against me, their brethren may well say,—Save us from our friends. And if I have not hesitated to admit something of difficulty involved in the scripture doctrine of the less guilty being beaten with few, and the more guilty with many stripes, how intensely ought the holders of the current doctrine to feel themselves pressed with the same difficulty.

It is now my turn to object. And the objection is incomparably more weighty as against orthodoxy. Let us see. You believe that every individual of the human race, who is not born again of the spirit, no matter for age or



other circumstances, ‘shall be cast into outer darkness, with weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth,’—shall receive ‘indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,’—and ‘shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.’ You also believe in degrees of guilt. That is, you believe there is the first faint dawn of responsibility;—that as people die at all ages, and under all circumstances, may die very soon after becoming responsible agents, and while yet their responsibility, owing either to age, intelligence, education, or other circumstances, is infinitesimally small. Yet the least vicious of the heathen, and the least guilty of the unregenerate in England, they whose advantages were the most scanty, while their disadvantages were the most enormous, are, on the popular theory, all handed over to eternal torment. For them as well as for the vilest is there never-ending suffering.

I know very well that many intelligent and pious persons, on whom the almost universal doctrine has taken too deep a hold to permit them altogether to abandon it *in words*, are in the habit of consoling their minds with the reflection that—as there are these manifestly innumerable gradations of guilt, from the faintest rudimental form thereof, up to its fearfulest maturity,—so the future punishment of multitudes who will fail of heaven shall be so light in comparison, as scarcely to deserve the name. In this way, to my knowledge do some, who are not willing to deny the common doctrine altogether, try to relieve their own minds when they contemplate the futurity of the unsaved. Then why preach an indiscriminate allotment to one common hell? If some of the lost, the least guilty of all, will suffer but little, why does the common doctrine, as taught from our pulpits, keep this out of sight, and reiterate the assertion that for all who are not fit for heaven there is eternal ‘weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.’

But alas! this view—which seems to make some approach to equity, to pay some tribute of respect to the strong instinctive sense of justice and righteousness which man, the product of an all-wise Creator’s hand, can never quite lose—will not bear the light. It yields no solid relief to the distracted mind. Only let it be examined, and the objection continues in nearly its original force.

For, *First*,—This very light punishment,—of the more thoughtful of the orthodox,—is to be **ETERNAL**! Nothing

can disguise that. Let it be granted that in the case of multitudes the positive inflictions shall be comparatively light. Give to orthodoxy every advantage. Let it soften and modify at pleasure. Still there is this element of ETERNITY! And to think of even a light punishment lasting for ever, in a world where there is no alleviation—no hope; and this the portion of the least guilty;—eternally shut out of heaven—eternally lost—to live for ever, conscious of being for ever doomed to despair—denied all pleasant employment—nothing honorable, nothing good, to engage the conscious powers—no possibility of personal improvement, or elevation of character,—all the happiness of the saved eternally beyond their reach—and dark, dark despair their everlasting portion?

To think of the punishment of those whose guilt is of the faintest shade, as mere privation, loss of all happiness, forfeiture of all good, and this felt and groaned under for ever by spirits that necessarily pine for good, certainly does not bring the lowest degree of punishment down to the first point of criminality in the moral scale. Still it is an infinite punishment for a finite demerit. And thus assuredly the orthodox are not in a condition to object that our theory scarcely consists with degrees of punishment. Their objection however has been replied to; and in addition I have undertaken to show how, while on the views of this volume the difficulty can be met, it remains in all its force against the very parties who would fain urge it.

And, *Secondly*,—While orthodoxy in its mildest form would exhibit the punishment of some as consisting in privation merely—losing sight of all that this privation necessarily involves,—it may be fairly submitted to them that even this poor solace fails them.

For let the least guilty, those who had fewest religious advantages, or who died shortly after their responsibility had commenced, be shut up in hell, in the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Let them become conscious of all that they have lost. Let them recognise that the vilest wretches that ever disgraced humanity, and the fiends that murderously though invisibly tempted them to evil, are to be their associates for ever; that through eternal ages the wrath of God is to rest upon them; and that there is no hope, no not the faintest; and how long will their original disparity in wickedness continue?

Or does orthodoxy dream that there will be no fearful growth of character in hell? We are often hearing how matured the devil has become in the hellish arts of temptation, by the practice of ages. The faculties of the saints also will expand in heaven. They shall rise from one degree of moral elevation to another. They shall become equal to their present conceptions of what the loftiest angels are. They shall become unutterably more than even this. And this by the laws of their intellectual and moral nature,—not by miracle.

Will not then the lost—if immortality be inalienably wrought into the very essence of their being, as some affirm, continue of necessity in like manner to attain to one enormous growth in wickedness after another; just as here on earth, ‘wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse?’ Will the child in wickedness, by some strange process of mental and moral petrefaction, continue a child for ever? How long will they who, on their entrance within the adamantine gates of hell, were the least depraved, and were therefore subjected to the lesser torment, remain thus comparatively unhardened in sin; when they find themselves in a world where there is no chance of struggling back into virtue, no opportunity afforded; but where all their associates are unutterably vile, and many of them even demons, whose rage and cruelty and abhorrence of God and holiness are beyond the power of tongue to describe? Will they not, themselves, must they not, by dire necessity of nature, become fearfully confirmed in wickedness? Finding themselves irretrievably doomed to woe, for the evil they had done during their brief abode on earth, while their responsibility was but commencing, will they not hate with ever growing intensity of hatred the God who has thus plunged them into hopeless misery?

But I cannot pursue the thought. The mind turns away unable to bear the ideal scene. In another sense than the prophet’s, ‘the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.’ And yet is it almost necessary that we should gird up our loins for the fearful task.

Let the reader however admit, what indeed he ought not for a moment to question, that there will be expansion, development, growth of intellectual power and moral character, in the next state. And this as a matter of course; by virtue of the very laws which the Creator hath stamped upon

our being. And then, in one indiscriminate hell, will not all degrees of guilt, all shades of character, be soon confounded? And under the influence of despair, under the promptings of hatred to him who hath thus plunged them into one abyss, and wrought on by the conduct of their fellow sufferers, and goaded by their torments, and maddened by the hot tumult and hellish strife of those doleful regions, which they are consciously to endure for ever and ever,—will not, must not, all the doomed inhabitants of the pit soon attain to a giant growth in wickedness? This, as it appears to us, is the inevitable tendency of the sense of eternal despair.

And if the friends of this tremendous orthodoxy shall object to the representation we have given, it is submitted that, however they may shrink therefrom, it is nevertheless perfectly fair. Fair, do I say? It is a most subdued and faint and feeble intimation of one legitimate consequence of their cherished faith. Exaggeration is utterly impossible. And let them never close their eyes to anything they really believe. There is no merit in refusing to see. Voluntary blindness is no virtue. To acquiesce implicitly in everything the righteous judge really determines, is indeed the pleasant duty of a child of God, as pleasant to our own minds as it is filially becoming. But unquestionably to acquiesce in a human and therefore possibly mistaken interpretation of his counsels, is quite another thing. The former is a virtue, the latter a fault. Rather indeed than I should write or speak a word of irreverent reflection on any of the divine proceedings, let my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. I would cheerfully die a thousand deaths, rather than allow the faintest shadow of an unworthy thought of the Most High God my Creator, and Redeemer, and Father, to harbor in my mind. Let my heart be torn quivering from my wretched bosom ere it become the allowed lurking place of one traitorous suspicion of the rectitude of his decisions, “whose work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

And I pray the orthodox, in their fairness and kindness, not to mistake my remarks on their interpretation of scripture, for reflections on the divine testimony itself. I trust to be found to “tremble at God’s words” as reverently as themselves. But I deem them wrong, fearfully wrong in



their interpretation of “the lively oracles.” And it is their (to my mind) utterly mistaken and terribly injurious doctrine that I speak of thus freely; and not any doctrine of that blessed book which ‘is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path;’ ‘the joy and rejoicing of my heart,’ ‘better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.’

But to return to our point, after this brief digression, prompted by a natural solicitude to prevent misapprehension. It was objected that our theory is incompatible with the scripture doctrine of degrees of punishment. To this it was replied, *First*, that there was one very obvious method by which, though all that were unfit for existence should be finally destroyed, the sufferings to be endured might yet be proportioned to their guilt. An exact providence might perfectly serve that retributive justice which the scriptures intimate;—or, the silent but sure operation of latent laws might accomplish the result.

And, *Secondly*, it was submitted that whatever weight there may be in the objection, it lies properly and with tremendously accumulated force against the popular doctrine itself, rather than against our own. For that the orthodox belief, while it holds to degrees of punishment in words, in reality confounds all variety of crime and award, by dooming even the least guilty to endless punishment, and that under circumstances which must inevitably obliterate all traces of original disparity of guilt. And thus the best artillery of our opponents seems to us no longer to play upon our ranks, but, inevitably abandoned by those who brought it into the field, to be successfully turned against them, and to become a frowning rampart to defend the position which it was planted to assail.

## VII.

We have now adverted to the chief objections brought against our views. There are others, it is true, still unnoticed. But these are, so far as I know them, very subordinate ones, which will be easily disposed of by the thoughtful reader, if the general principles of this volume meet with his approval. I refer to such as the following, for example,—which are all urged by the Eclectic.

§ That the view given of immortality, as the gift of Christ, represents a physical rather than a moral result as accomplished by the Saviour’s mediatorial work.

To which it is obvious to reply, First,—That we admit of just as much of a moral result as do the orthodox themselves. And not merely as much, but the very same precisely. Whatever they affirm respecting the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, the force of motive, the power of truth and example, &c. &c., that we affirm also. And, Secondly.—They cannot make it an objection that we represent some of the results of a Saviour's mediation to be of a physical kind, unless they are prepared to deny that any physical blessings whatever are bestowed by and through Christ. But how stands the case? Do they not themselves gratefully acknowledge and admire results of this very character? Do they not believe in 'the resurrection of the dead?' Are they not 'looking for the Lord Jesus from heaven, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body?' And is this a purely moral good? Does it not come under the head of the strictly physical? And then, are they not indebted for this to our adorable Redeemer? So that they also, as thoroughly as ourselves, believe in an emphatically physical effect accomplished by Christ on those who believe, as the result of his mediation on their behalf. And thus there is no force in this objection. But another is—

§ That if a vast multitude of irreclaimable sinners were really to be destroyed, such a fearful catastrophe would surely have been more explicitly announced in the scriptures.

To which also two replies instantly suggest themselves. First,—that this awful consummation is affirmed as plainly as words can teach it, if only we take the language of scripture in its plain and obvious sense. We need not here repeat the texts so often quoted in the course of this discussion; but what words or figures would convey the idea, if those employed throughout the new testament on this subject are not allowed to teach it? The wicked are 'stubble,' 'chaff,' 'tares,' that are to be 'burned up;' they are faithless servants, or rebellious subjects, that are to be 'cut asunder,' 'slain;' they are to be 'punished with everlasting destruction [proceeding] from the presence of the Lord, even from the glory of his power;' to be 'cast into a lake of fire,' and to be 'destroyed both body and soul in hell.'

Really the objection seems to me utterly destitute of force. But if the friends who differ think otherwise, let them, Secondly,—consider how the principle, on which their objection is founded, will bear on the popular creed, on behalf of which it is urged against us. Is not the objection much more becoming and reasonable as proposed by us against the common belief? May we not, with incomparably more propriety, urge that if the orthodox doctrine were the true one, it would most assuredly have been set forth in a far different manner than that in which inspired writers have expressed themselves on the subject? If for myriads of God's intelligent, though, alas! rebellious creatures, there were a whole eternity of torment, would the teachers of this appalling doctrine have contented themselves with the few and simple expressions which are usually quoted in its support? Read our popular hymns on the subject, and see how Watts and others have set forth the future. Or, if it please better, read Pollok's description of the torments of hell.

But no, my brethren will properly refuse to ask the poet's aid. And yet the popular doctrine cannot be exaggerated. Come however to cool and prosaic divines. Take that mighty and excellent man, Jonathan Edwards. Read his sermons on the subject, and see the manner in which it is natural for the soberest men to express themselves, who really *believe* the doctrine. But we need not prolong our remarks. If there be any force at all in the objection, it lies really against the popular doctrine, and not against our own. Let us turn to another—

§ It is alleged that if our view were correct, the destruction of the wicked would naturally take place at the judgment day itself.

But it does not appear to me that we know enough about the judgment day, to be able to lay down, with anything like probability even, what may or may not be considered an obvious and natural portion of the proceedings of that sublimely awful event. We, none of us, however, expect the judgment *day* to be a day of precisely four and twenty hours in length. What then do we expect? It is not for me to answer; but most probably a fair reply would show how little force there is in the present objection.

Over how long a period the judicial proceedings may be extended, we cannot say. Nor whether the figurative language of scripture on the subject is intended to do more than powerfully impress the mind, through the medium of the imagination, with the certainty and precision of those results, which in human governments can only be accomplished by means of careful investigation in open court; but which the unlimited wisdom of the appointed judge can perfectly secure without any such scrutiny; while his irresistible power, informed by omniscience, can, in the twinkling of an eye, place each individual in precisely his proper position.

For my own part, I agree with what I take to be the view of the most intelligent christians, that the vivid descriptions of the grand final assize are chiefly intended to assure us of *results*, rather than to convey any idea of the *process* by which those results shall be accomplished. In which case the objection, not possessed of much weight on any view, altogether falls.

And indeed, were it not for the fact of degrees of punishment, I would cheerfully accept the sentiment of the objector, which some passages of scripture would seem to favor. I allude to such as 2. Thess. i. 7-10. 'When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, &c. when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, &c.

But we must close this chapter, already too protracted. And I am not conscious of having omitted any objection that appeared to possess any weight entitling it to attention. Whether indeed the brief replies suggested to those that have been adduced will commend themselves to the judgment of the reader, I cannot tell. But he will remember that the demand to dissipate, to every one's satisfaction, all objections whatever that can be raised to any doctrine, is a demand which all parties will refuse.

Nor will the candid reader fail to perceive that by placing myself in the position of a respondent, I place myself on the least advantageous ground. How would the advocates of the popular doctrine meet the assault to which *that* may be exposed? Cannot fearfully formidable objections be



advanced against it, to nearly all of which their one reply would be, "If it be taught in scripture, all carnal reasonings must give way; there can be no valid objection against anything that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken." A sound and sufficient reply, when we have indeed ascertained from scripture that such or such a view is really the doctrine of inspiration.

And perhaps the writer may be pardoned if he flatters himself to have shown sufficient cause for believing the views suggested in this volume to be the sentiment of the new testament. In which case, all objections, were they a thousand times more numerous and formidable than they really are, are at once disposed of to the perfect satisfaction of every reverent and docile disciple, who has learnt that secret of acquiring heavenly knowledge—If any man will be wise, 'let him become a fool, that he may be wise.'

## CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

---

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.—Fears of the pious—needless—Legitimate advantages of proposed doctrine—The one question—Truth powerful for good—Infidelity disarmed—Increased boldness of preachers—Diminished confidence of the sinner—More attractive exhibitions of religion—Conclusion.

There are many very estimable christians, whose pious anxieties and scruples, arising out of their intense solicitude for the honor of God and the welfare of men, deserve the most respectful and tender consideration, who have expressed considerable regret that the present subject should have been mooted. They have asked, in affectingly regretful and dissuasive tones, what good can possibly result from the agitation of the question; while they have sorrowfully forboded many sad and melancholy consequences, as the necessary result of bringing the established doctrine into suspicion.

I wish it were possible fully to meet their sad anticipations; but in the limits I have allotted to myself it is to be feared this is impossible. Let them accept my acknowledgments of their worth. I do ready homage to their sensitive piety. Though my judgment is not with them, my heart is one with theirs. And it is matter of grief to me that my endeavors to serve the cause of evangelical truth wear, to their apprehension, quite another aspect. I almost seem an enemy, where my highest ambition is to prove myself a friend.

Many considerations however come instantly crowding in upon the mind, calculated I think to mitigate their fear,

to banish it altogether, and even to convert it into bright and confident hope. And to their pious candor and devout consideration, I affectionately commend a few of those numerous thoughts.

§ 1. Our one grand inquiry must ever be, What is truth? No matter how contrary it may be to our cherished belief, to our settled judgment, to all our habits of thought, or our ideas of the useful. Truth is from God. Error is from man. There is no room for hesitation then. The true is the good, the fair, the beautiful. Truth is powerful for good. Truth alone is powerful for real and ultimate good. All error is injurious. Even if an error have seemed in any case beneficial, mischief has lurked under the fair exterior. Protestants must not, cannot, consent to pious frauds. We may not do evil that good may come. We may not therefore tolerate or wink at evil, that supposed good may continue. Let the fair temple of our faith be built of the gold and silver and precious stones which the all-wise builder hath provided; and let us eschew the wood, hay, and stubble, that cannot stand the most searching and fiery test.

Surely we can trust God for the consequences which grow out of his own truth. He speaks; let us listen heedfully, and repeat faithfully what the oracle declares. We are of yesterday, and know nothing; He is from everlasting to everlasting, and his wisdom is unsearchable. Fellow christian, let our one question be, on this and every other subject of revelation, whether doctrinal or ecclesiastical,—What is truth?

§ 2. If the view taken in these pages of the ultimate doom of the incorribly impenitent, be the true one, as, after years of intensely anxious thought and prayer, we firmly believe,—it must be useful. It must be every way useful. It must be the most useful. It must, on the whole, be the exclusively useful one. And this whether we can see it or not. We can however perceive many important advantages, and will presently advert to a few.

But on the other hand, if, after all, the current doctrine be *not* the true one, if it be not a fair echo of the divine utterances, as we submit it is not, then its injuriousness must be incalculable, terrific. If it be not a truth, what a portentous error must it be! Its seeming good has in that

case concealed a most enormous amount of evil. Let my reader only allow himself to suppose that the common doctrine is not true; and let him contemplate it for a few moments from that standing point, and how fearfully in that case has it misrepresented the character of God; exhibiting him, as we have before had occasion to remark, as purposely sustaining the guilty in existence, that he might inflict on them never-ending punishment. I say, if this be not true, what a frightful idea of the Divine Being it presents. Evil then is never, never to cease. There will be sin and wretchedness for ever. And the holy will be assured of the fact. And while they will be mercifully exempt from all pain and fear themselves, and will be in a bright and happy world where everything invites to joy and gladness, they will know that there are vast multitudes of their fellows passing the livelong night of eternity in weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. How will this knowledge affect them? President Edwards says, that by contrast it will greatly heighten their own enjoyment, and that saints will be intensely glad to see how the wicked writhe in anguish.

Tremendous orthodoxy this, my brethren. What! will insensibility to the woes of the wretched ever become a virtue, lending new beauty to the countenances of the holy? On *earth* it would be rightly deemed a mark of fearful debasement, to be able to look with a cold un pitying eye, and a callous heart, on the miseries of even the most abandoned. Will that which is a vice on earth be a grace in heaven? Then will it really be a more exalted state than the present one, or will there be a true elevation of character, if sin and wretchedness affect us not? Is the standard of virtue thus mutable, that what is wrong to-day is right to-morrow; what is vicious here is gracious elsewhere?

I must confess that I for one have no wish ever to cease to sympathise with sorrow, however guilty the wretched victim thereof may be; nor shall I deem myself improved in character, if ever I find myself indifferent to the woes of the miserable. Nor can I conceive that the completest confidence in the rectitude of the divine proceedings will ever banish all concern from celestial minds, and make them perfectly indifferent to the fact that wickedness and wretchedness triumph in some parts of God's fair universe.



I have always thought it the part of a demon rather than a saint to rejoice over the sufferings of the lost. But if we are to credit some of the most honored defenders of the popular doctrine, we must believe that—— But I must check my hand. The field is too large to enter on in the present volume. If orthodoxy be wrong on this point, how fearfully wrong is it. If the light that is in it be darkness, how great is that darkness!

§ 3. If the views suggested in this work are true, are they not admirably adapted to wrest from the hand of the infidel or the sceptic one of his most favorite weapons? We know very well the proper ground to take if we were sure that the popular dogma were really contained in scripture. Were it there we would hold to it, though the world were as full of infidels as there are leaves in the forest, and though every man we met wore the uninviting aspect of the sceptic. We have no sympathy with any who would denude our holy religion of mystery. A religion without its mystery is no fitting religion for man. But it is not for us to invent mysteries.

We think that on a proper occasion we could rebuke irreverent impugnors of the divine rectitude as promptly and earnestly as our brethren. Nor would we hesitate to refuse all discussion, with the apostle's righteous retort,—‘Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?’ But when the sceptic urges objections against infinite misery for finite misdeeds, we deem that he is not so much replying against God, as against men that have mistaken the words of God. And right joyous are we to throw down this buttress of infidelity, which orthodoxy has assisted to build, and to compel the unhappy opposer of christianity to an unwonted silence, while the majestic voice is heard from the everlasting throne, ‘Are not my ways just and equal, saith the Lord.’

By manifestation of the truth we shall commend ourselves to every man's conscience; and every mouth shall be stopped; and every enemy to God and holiness be struck dumb, as though the great white throne were already set, and he standing pale and speechless and affrighted at the bar of judgment. Brethren, the sinner will be speechless then, why not make him speechless now? Truth lends you her radiant mirror, to flash its resistless rays on

the misty eyeballs of the guilty, and dazzle and confound him; and thus holding him at advantage, enter in and debate with him touching the glorious things which make for his everlasting peace. But it seems to me as though some malignant spirit of error had breathed on the heavenly gift, and dimmed its brightness; so that instead of flashing the concentrated rays of the noon-day sun, we have rather the pale and broken moon-beam faintly reflected from the mist covered surface of a sluggish stream.

§ 4. If our views be found to be correct, it may be expected that those who become convinced thereof will be much more bold to preach even 'the terrors of the Lord.' Perfectly convinced of the righteousness of God, and confident that the threatened punishment commends itself even to the consciences of the guilty themselves, they will speak the word with all boldness, as they ought to speak. They will not have to pause in the midst of earnest appeals, as they often feel prompted at present, to try to justify what they are conscious looks like undue severity. An idea which they only stifle in their own minds by their filial confidence in the character of God, and their pious habit of taking refuge in his necessary rectitude. But many things induce us to believe that if once convinced of the correctness of the doctrine, they will urge it home upon the sinner with all the greater confidence of truth, with all the transparently obvious sincerity of men who firmly believe and even approve it.

But the reader asks whether the preachers of the popular doctrine are not fully convinced of the truth of *their* assertions. Would they preach what they disbelieved? No;—never. Neither could I by any possibility be more painfully misapprehended, than to be understood as hinting at the bare possibility of such a thing.

But every one knows the mighty difference which there is, between firmly believing a truth after protracted and painful examination, and holding an article of a creed which at first was adopted perhaps as a matter of course, and because every one else professed to believe it, and which we have by long habit grown accustomed to, without ever dreaming of calling its truth in question. The one, however tenaciously adhered to, floats in reality on the surface of the mind; the other sinks into the deepest re-

cesses of the heart. "I hold," and "I believe," are words which represent two very different states of mind, and two very different degrees of power.

Now two often our belief was in reality formed for us by others, at a time when the mind was more plastic, and the affections more lively, than the judgment was sound. And while yet in early life, we became attached to some one or other religious party, with all possible influences bearing us in one direction. How many, in after years, do we suppose ever go through all the points of their habitual belief, rigidly and independently and impartially examining its claims? Is this the general habit? Or, even if it were as common as circumstances would seem to indicate it is rare, is the position in which a man finds himself, after many years of close connection with a party, during which he has been identified with their views, favorable for the detection of error, and the acquisition of corrector sentiments?

Besides, if men desire to serve God as miniters of Christ, an honorable wish which is generally formed in youth, are they not expected to conform to the opinions of the body which they belong to. What is then their course?

In order to enter the ministry of the Church of England, for instance, they must while mere youths swear their assent and consent to articles of faith, many of which demand the best exercise of the maturest judgment. And a candidate for admission into a dissenting college must be strictly orthodox, according to the acceptation of the term in the denomination he belongs to. During the term of his studentship his orthodoxy is jealously guarded.\* Then as a

\* It will be remembered that, a year or two since, nine or ten young men were expelled from one of the Independent Colleges in Scotland, whose sole offence, as I understood, was doubting of certain calvinistic peculiarities. Their piety, I believe, was unquestioned, and their sentiments would have secured them admission into the contemplated "Evangelical Alliance." They professed an unhesitating belief in the doctrine of "the Trinity;" they held fast to the Divinity and Atonement of Christ, and maintained the personality of the Holy Spirit, and his agency in conversion. What then was their offence? They doubted the doctrine of election, as generally held by Calvinists; and, so far as I could understand, seemed inclined on that subject, and the kindred one of the operations of the Spirit, to the views of the Wesleyan body. Their punishment was expulsion. And certain of the english religious periodicals called loudly for their excommunication from the churches to which they belonged, and denounced beforehand any churches that should permit them to minister among them.

candidate for pastoral labor he must, almost above all things, be orthodox. And once settled in the pastorate, he is generally surrounded by watchful guardians of his orthodoxy again. While most of the religious periodicals seem systematically to discountenance everything like freedom of theological inquiry. We all seem afraid to trust the human mind out of leading strings. And this even when religion is evidently enthroned in the affections of the devout inquirer, and notwithstanding we profess to believe in a Holy Spirit, whose peculiar and gracious office it is to 'guide into all truth.' But the Holy Spirit must guide in what we deem the right way, or else woe to the man who has been guided. Each religious party appears to have its own infallible interpretations of inspired truth.\*

But not to pursue a train of thought which is almost painful,—What is the bearing of all this? It is adduced, merely to show the reader how the views of many, perhaps the majority, were easily adopted in early life, and have been as easily retained, in many cases without much deep personal or independent investigation; while the scriptures being constantly read from that one standing point, certain texts have been from the beginning, almost as a matter of course, assumed to teach such and such a view; and thus the mind has become fixed, confirmed, rather by the force of habit, than by the force of thought.

It is true that there are very many honorable exceptions, men of vigorous minds and independent spirits, who are ever watchful over themselves with a godly jealousy, lest illegitimate influences should insensibly bias their judgments, and impede them in their search for truth. To such none of my remarks apply.

There are others, again, of similar mental habits, who, feeling the awfulness of the subject, and secretly misgiving the popular notion, more even than they acknowledge to themselves, have in their public appeals studiously restricted themselves to the very language of scripture itself, and used even this but sparingly. This is the case with some of the best and holiest and truthfulest men I know. They have their very grave doubts on the subject.

\* If I am not greatly misinformed, it is annually inquired concerning each minister of the Wesleyan body, whether he has in any respect departed from the views of their founder. All honor to his memory; but alas, for truth! when any man is thus called "master."



They have had these doubts for years. Meanwhile they have trusted to be quite safe in using the exact words of scripture. But if these are popularly taken in a certain definite sense, the preacher who, under such circumstances, confines himself to them, sanctions that definite construction of passages which to his own mind are indefinite.

Now whether we regard the larger or the smaller class referred to,\* I think we shall find enough in the facts adduced, to convince us that the real 'terrors of the Lord' will scarcely be presented with becoming force. The comparatively easy belief of the one class, with the secret consciousness that their doctrine needs to be justified to the sinner, whom they wish for his own sake healthfully to alarm, will rob their customary appeals of much of the power they might otherwise possess; while the thoughtful perplexity of the other class conduces to the same result.

And thus I trust it will not be deemed presumptuous to anticipate much greater boldness than before, in proclaiming the only and terrible alternative of repentance and faith in Christ, from those who shall intelligently believe and heartily adopt the views of this work. It appears to me that their faith will be more hearty, their personal misgivings fewer, their consciousness of having even the sinner's own conscience with them greater; and that all this must clothe them with new power. While also they will experience a satisfaction which will still further conduce to the same result, in using the scripture terms on the subject in their obvious sense. They will not have to expound *death* as meaning *life*—never-ending life—never-ending life in torment; nor destruction as meaning continued preservation, in order to suffer, &c.; nor to use such contradictory expressions as "for ever dying, and yet never dead." But if I may judge from experience,† there will

\* Of course the reader will not understand me to imply that all preachers necessarily belong to one or other of the classes mentioned. But to none of those who, after due personal investigation, really and fully *believe* the popular doctrine, do my remarks at all refer. Men who really believe, and deeply feel, and earnestly preach, will always be powerful.

† I wish propriety would allow me to quote from communications received on this very subject. One minister, who expresses his thankfulness for the "spiritual results" in his own congregation, which have followed the preaching of these sentiments, says, "They are life from the dead to the church, and hell at the door to the wicked."

be to their apprehension a straightforwardness, a directness, and an obviousness about the language of scripture, and it will all so thoroughly harmonise, one part with another, that they will feel their feet planted upon a rock.

They shall more consciously take up the prophet's mantle, and feel that they have drunk more deeply of the true prophetic spirit,—‘*We believe, and THEREFORE SPEAK.*’ Having waited upon God and gained clearer views of his counsel and design, they shall find that they have renewed their strength. Their eye shall glance with new confidence and heroic delight on the armour wherewith God's own hand hath girded them. More consciously, we think, will their loins be girt about with truth; while with a giant's grasp they hold the anointed shield of heavenly workmanship, and the sword of celestial temper, whose edge nothing earthly can ever blunt—the sword, that is, of the Spirit, and the shield of FAITH, which can so easily quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

§ 5. And in addition to this increased confidence in the tone of preachers, they will indisputably have a far greater hold on the sinners' own conscience. The sinner who—while the speaker threatened him with an eternal torment—had without much difficulty kept himself on guard, and been repelled and hardened by exhibitions which seemed to him an outrage on all justice, will much more readily recognise that they who rebel against the government of God, and trample his law under foot, deserve to “perish.”

The remembrances of earlier years, considerable personal intercourse with the irreligious and the sceptical, together with several years of ministerial labor, all force me to the conclusion that the preaching of everlasting torment affects chiefly, and almost exclusively, that very portion of our hearers who would be quite as beneficially influenced, or even more so, by a lower exhibition of the terrific; while the effect on those to whom one would naturally be the most disposed to threaten it, is for the most part opposite to desirable. For even where they are not repelled and hardened, as suggested above, an equally injurious effect of another kind is produced. For the sinner, utterly disbelieving the assertion that his Creator will keep him alive for ever in misery, for the sins, however aggravated, of a few years—an assertion which does not commend itself to

his conscience—is left to form his own opinion of the kind of treatment he may expect. And then of course self-love will prompt to the most favorable conclusions.

One thing is plain. The ungodly do not credit the preachers of eternal woe. Does any one imagine that the mass of our population believe anything like it?

Then let us recognise how fearfully we have contributed to bring about the ruinous indifference to religion which we lament. For having, by our terrible exaggerations of the future, weakened and utterly lost the confidence of the irreligious in our statements, we have unintentionally set them loose to think almost how they will in regard to their state after death; and have thus absolutely prepared the soil for the reception of those very seeds of error, the growth of which, and their legitimate and now ripening fruits, fill us with dismay.

It is appallingly dangerous, my brethren, to weaken and destroy in the masses their belief of the preachers of christianity. But this is done, and now almost every body sees it. Of course it would be absurd to attribute the sad effect to any one cause alone. But melancholy personal reminiscences, observation, and the testimony of many of the very class referred to, convince me, as does all reasoning on the subject, that to the cause now indicated must we attribute very much of that almost systematic and confirmed irreligion which we deplore.

Many christians are fearfully alarmed at the doctrine of universal restoration, and shrink from the view suggested in this work, chiefly, as tending to promote it. Strange notion this. Do they not perceive that the doctrine of universal restitution (quite as scriptural as that of infinite misery) derives one of its strongest recommendations from the incredible horror of the prevailing belief? Does not exaggeration of one kind beget exaggeration of just the opposite kind? Repelled by perceived error in one direction, do not most men unwisely fly as far in the contrary direction? Let one class exaggerate the justice of God, and what more natural than that others should equally exaggerate his love and mercy? Let the orthodox distort the one attribute into injustice, and many who are shocked thereat will as unwisely distort the other into weakness.

I beg then to submit to the thoughtful, that to threaten the rebellious and impenitent with destruction,—with a

“miserable destruction”—will be to secure the verdict of their own consciences. For why should the All-sustainer, in whom alone we live and move and have our being, keep in existence those wretched creatures who, while they never can be happy in themselves, by reason of their confirmed opposition to God, can never be of any service to others, but the melancholy reverse;—blighting some part of God’s fair universe with their presence and incorrigible viciousness, and distressing the holy and the compassionate by the knowledge of their sinfulness and misery? Let us scripturally present to them the incurred “wrath” of heaven, and then when we demand with the apostle ‘Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance?’ they shall be self-condemned and speechless.

Thus then it is believed that our doctrine will strengthen the preacher, and weaken the sinner—greatly increase the moving power, and diminish the repelling,—and so, in a twofold manner, secure a holier result.

§ 6. And this will be additionally secured by another thing. If preachers, when the future condition of the wicked is their theme, find themselves deprived of their common topic of declamation—the eternal duration of the suffering—they will turn the same amount of energy of appeal into another and more efficient direction. They will dwell on the *certainty* of it\*—on the *nearness* of it—on the justice, propriety, and necessity of it.

It has often appeared to me that very much of the endeavor to impress the sinner’s mind, by heaping up illustration after illustration of a whole eternity spent in woe, has been thrown away. Nearer, and directer, and more forcible considerations have meanwhile been forgotten or overlooked. And by dwelling chiefly on the element of eternity, the sinner has been almost taught that it would not be so very terrible if it were not everlasting. But those other considerations, it is submitted, are in the very nature of things greatly more adapted to convince and to affect.

§ 7. Again, if the ministers of religion become convinced that they are not justified by scripture in threaten-

\* The reader will allow me to commend to his notice a tract by Rev. E. White, entitled “The Terrors of the Lord: an Argument with the Fearless.” It is published by Jackson and Walford, and is admirably adapted for circulation among the class specified.



ing the sinner with an eternity of woe, that same holy anxiety—which has prompted them, though thus disproportionately, to make the chief appeal to his fears, which it was hoped (but in most instances in vain) terribly to arouse—will now prompt them to besiege men the more assiduously and variously on the side of their hopes and affections. Preachers must arm themselves with motives. They have nothing else to work with. And if one kind be somewhat lessened, they will pay so much the more attention to, and use so much the more powerfully, those which legitimately remain. And thus it may be expected that, while there is abundantly sufficient of ‘the terrors of the Lord,’ religion will become in their hands much more generous and elevating and joyous and attractive than it has heretofore been. And as those who are most under the influence of noble and elevated considerations most thoroughly take on true nobleness of character, the whole effect must be in every way beneficial.

Will the pious reader, whose praiseworthy solicitude made him deprecate the discussion which has been raised on this solemn subject, kindly accept and candidly consider the few suggestions that have been briefly submitted to him. It is hoped that he will see some reason for believing that his previous fears were groundless, and that, at all events, it is not in the nature of things that injury should result from the views submitted in these pages. Possibly he may come at length to agree with the writer, that, so far as short-sighted mortals can judge, they seem every way more adapted for various good, than those which have so long held almost universal and unquestioned sway. Still the one question must be, ‘What is Truth?’

And we can at least agree in this, that we will seek anew that light which cometh from above; for ‘if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally to all men.’ He is ‘the Father of lights.’ The spirit which he breathes into his children, is the spirit of truth. Lead us, O Lord, and guide us! To whom should we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life.



















Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01009 7428